BearPaw Legal Education & Resource Centre
NEWSWIRE

Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
April 17 – 24, 2014

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Aboriginal Arts & Culture

Powerful Maori movie a map of sorts for First Nations filmmakers wanting to tell warrior stories

By: Randall King

Posted: 04/17/2015 3:00 AM



Lawrence Makaore in The Dead Lands (above), a perfect fit for Adam Beach and Jeremy Torrie's Bandwidth Theatre.

At the newly launched Bandwidth Theatre on the corner of Sherbrook and Ellice, a new film from New Zealand has the potential to show aboriginal Canadian filmmakers the way.

Since it opened late in 2014, the Bandwidth has been playing an assortment of movies, from low-budget horror to high-minded documentaries. But as it's connected to the Adam Beach Film Institute, it also has an agenda, under the stewardship of founding partners Beach, producer Jim Compton and filmmaker Jeremy Torrie, to inspire young filmmakers, especially young First Nations filmmakers.

Movie Review

The Dead Lands

- Starring James Rolleston and Lawrence Makaore
- Bandwidth Theatre
- 18A
- 107 minutes
- 3 1/2 stars out of five



Top, Lawrence Makaore in The Dead Lands, a perfect fit for Adam Beach (above, L-R) and Jeremy Torrie's Bandwidth Theatre. (JOHN WOODS / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

In that capacity, The Dead Lands is not just an exciting movie, it's a fine example of how an indigenous culture can tell its stories on film, Torrie says.

"The Maori are 20 years ahead of us as far as cinematic storytelling," Torrie says. "We absolutely should be seeing these kind of films here. We've got all these great locations. The problem is they've had the opportunity to make films; we've not had that opportunity."

It was actually 21 years ago when Maori-centred movie announced itself with Lee Tamahori's brilliant 1994 drama Once Were Warriors, the story of a modern-day Maori family afflicted by violence, alcoholism and sexual abuse. In the film, Maori warrior tradition is turned on itself, until the family's valiant matriarch (Rena Owen) employs traditional means to heal.

The movie made such an impact on Torrie, he has just finished writing the first draft of a remake set in Winnipeg starring Beach.

"We're just using that template and giving it a new face," Torrie says.

But he has a task ahead of him in getting it made. Aboriginal filmmakers in Canada don't have the financial advantage enjoyed by Maori filmmakers in New Zealand, Torrie says.

"If we get Telefilm funding, we're lucky to get 20 per cent of the budget, and there's still a huge amount of money missing," he says. "So we're perpetually stuck in development hell."

"Adam and Jim and I are trying to show that there's a market for these kinds of film -- aboriginal audiences -- and that maybe mainstream audiences will discover these stories."

"In New Zealand, they have a much greater budget with their equivalent of Telefilm Canada, the New Zealand Film Commission," Torrie says. "They also have a language fund in Maori, that organization has been around for 15 years or more and they've become another important equity source for Maori film, whereas we can't do that yet. There's a lot of institutional barriers."

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Business at the Bandwidth has been up and down since opening, Torrie says, as the theatre is often scrambling to find compelling films to screen.

One of the its unexpected successes was What We Do in Darkness, a comedy mockumentary about a clan of vampires living in modern-day Wellington, N.Z. Curiously, the film's writer-director-stars, Jemaine Clement and Taika Waititi, are both of Maori heritage, but the film doesn't touch on that at all.

Torrie says he can see a day when First Nations filmmakers might make a movie that doesn't necessarily have to do with aboriginal culture. But they're not there yet.

"We're not anywhere close to telling stories like What We Do... because we've got a lot of other more important stories for us to tell first," he says.

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In New Zealand, the remnants of Maori tradition are primarily visible to the world in rugby matches, where the national team, the All Blacks, perform the haka, a dance designed to terrorize opponents, going back to warrior tradition.

The Dead Lands, a film by Toa Fraser, offers a closer look at that tradition in a story of combat and redemption set in pre-colonial New Zealand.

It is touted as the first film to feature Mau r£kau, a fierce and fearsome Maori martial art.

But for all the film's savagery, blood-letting and cannibalism, there is also room for nuance and even notes of poignance.

Hongi (James Rolleston) is a chieftain's son, belonging to a tribe that sues for peace with a hostile neighbouring tribe over a past conflict.

Hongi becomes aware the other tribe's delegation has a non-peaceful agenda when he spies one member deliberately befouling the remains of a dead warrior. When they do indeed prove treacherous, Hongi emerges as one of the only male survivors in the tribe.

When his enemies depart for the cursed "Dead Lands," Hongi follows in the hopes of recruiting a legendary warrior known either as "Monster" or "Warrior" to his cause.

Warrior (Lawrence Makaore) proves unexpectedly amenable, and not just because the invitation will allow him to indulge his blood lust. For all his outcast status, Warrior feels a certain kinship with Hongi, the last male of his tribe. He offers the lad a bit of instruction before they take off to find the warriors who all but wiped out Hongi's tribe.

Director Toa Fraser departs considerably from the more civilized content of his past films, the reincarnation fantasy Dean Spanley and the dance film Giselle. The Dead Lands is very much saturated in a rough natural setting that nevertheless looks a world away from the more lush environs of Peter Jackson's Tolkien epics.

The "Monster" monicker, it must be said, is especially appropriate to the character. As in old monster movies, the film is just so much more exciting when Makaore is onscreen. He is terrifying to behold, but also magnificent in his presence.

As his back story is slowly revealed, one is even moved to sympathy for this devil, no small feat given that one scene shows him chopping up the corpse of an enemy in preparation for cooking.

Direct Link: http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/entertainment/movies/something-fierce-300247811.html

Little Big Laugh: Don Kelly, the aboriginal comic

Peter Simpson - The Big Beat
Published on: April 9, 2015
Last Updated: April 18, 2015 6:38 PM EDT



Aboriginal comedian Don Kelly regularly performs at Yuk Yuks in Ottawa.

A joke from Ottawa comic Don Kelly . . .

“Halloween last year, the doorbell rings. I go and there’s this cute little girl, five or six years old, big smile, rosy cheeks, but she’s in the Indian princess costume, like, some burlap, leather vest, cheap wig with braids, a cardboard feather. I say, ‘What are you?’ She says, ‘I’m an Indian!’ I say, ‘Really? I’m a white guy,’ and I take her treats.”

Kelly is Ojibway, from the Onigaming First Nation near Kenora in Northern Ontario. "We're lake people, a lot of fish," he says, though his request while arranging our lunch interview was "no fish."

That's one small stereotype busted. It's the larger stereotypes about aboriginals that Kelly sometimes targets in his stand-up comedy, or on television with his APTN program Fish Out of Water, and on radio as a regular competitor on CBC's The Debaters. He uses the mainstream forum of stand-up to go after misbegotten beliefs that, like all stereotypes, don't die easily. For example, why does an aboriginal comic have the name Kelly?

"People say to me, 'Don Kelly doesn't sound Native,' I should use my traditional name," he tells me. "Unfortunately my traditional name is 'Runs Like a Girl.' Very silly, probably offensive now to women, when I think about it."

That's a joke from around 1997, when Kelly, now 50, first walked onto a stage at Yuk Yuks in Ottawa. Back then, non-aboriginal people "would get a little tense, because they didn't know what was coming. Is he going to go on some harangue now about every evil injustice that's been done against Native people? Or, equally bad, is he going to go the other way and play on every drunken-Indian stereotype we've ever heard and make us uncomfortable?"

Is this gap between aboriginal humour and non-aboriginal audiences, lessening? Are the stereotypes behind it giving way to more understanding, however slowly?

"When I started we" — aboriginals — "were Canada's dirty little secret," Kelly says. "We were the thing that made every Canadian uncomfortable, because Canadians like to feel that we're fair, and just, and good-hearted people. Our country, we're told, is the best, it's the beacon of human rights around the world — except for indigenous people. We're like the shadow that hangs over Canadians' view of themselves. They don't like to talk about it, they don't like to face it. I think that's changing now in a positive way. Still a lot of work to do, but it's changing."

Kelly was a CBC broadcaster and writer in Winnipeg, then moved to Ottawa in 1992 to do communications for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. With the commission he travelled to many aboriginal communities, both urban and remote, and he says then he first saw the vast diversity of aboriginals in Canada and the issues they face. "It was a real eye opener for me," he says.

Back then, even that audiences "got to see an aboriginal person entertaining them as a comedian" was unusual, he says, but there was soft tension to cut through in those small clubs. "I had to find a way to get into it that got people relaxed and laughing."

The first step was his natural affability, a disarming and welcoming joviality. "I've got a very smiley style," he says, "I've always been that way."

Next, while the best comedy often sparks a sense of unease or provocation, he didn't want to be "in people's faces." He understood that comedy can powerfully "reach all these different people of different backgrounds and different ages," but people don't want to be lectured, especially about their own historical failings.

"People who will not walk into a lecture on aboriginal history or aboriginal rights, will come into a comedy club, and if they laugh that means they get the point," he says. "I'm under no illusion it's going to change the world, but it might sort of get them thinking a little bit, and that's not a bad thing."

He's never been heckled for being aboriginal, apart from the occasional "woo woo woo" war chant as heard in old westerns (he calls the woo-er "a redneck," which always gets a laugh). Some jokes bring a scandalized response, such as when he asks if there are any aboriginals in the club. "I'd say seven times out of 10 there aren't, and I often say, 'Wow, when white people wipe out a race they're thorough, huh?' Then people 'ooo,' and I'll say 'too soon?' I'll say, 'I hope you're ooo-ing the reality behind that joke and not that I said it.'"

The reality is changing, he says. "I think there's a little more conversation happening now, because (for example) you've got the Truth and Reconciliation commission talking about residential schools. There's just more awareness of indigenous people. We've got the youngest, fastest growing population — that's why you're seeing things like (musicians) A Tribe Called Red really breaking through, and Tanya Tagaq. This comparatively young aboriginal population is "a real cultural force," he says.

"You've got all these young people with all this energy and creativity, a lot of them are in cities . . . You don't have to travel north or far outside the city to find a Native community." Meanwhile, urban aboriginals are "growing up with the same influences as a lot of young people, whether it's hip hop, whether it's modern art, whether it's comedy," he says.

"It's not this separate, dissociated culture anymore. We're into the mainstream now. We're into the same influences that other people are, and we're working on those, building on them."

Today, he says, people can see an aboriginal comedy show and not see it as an aboriginal comedy show. "I'm a Native and a comedian, but I don't consider myself a 'Native comedian,'" he says. "I don't see everything through a Native lens. When I order a pizza, I don't think, 'How do I as a Native Canadian feel about this pizza?' I order the pizza!" Not being able to resist a setup, he adds, "If I order buffalo wings, I feel a little guilty."

Seriously, though, it's about aboriginal role models, which were rare when Kelly was a kid. "You remember those days when TV actually ended at midnight or 1 a.m., and the Indian logo would come up? That was the main Indian I saw on TV when I was growing up."

There are more aboriginal role models in popular culture today — he says that Chief Dan George's wise and hilarious character in the 1970 film Little Big Man was the first he saw to break stereotypes — but he wishes there were now more who "were not there *because* they're Native."

"In commercials, I want to see more Native people just being the guy who's with his wife buying detergent. . . I want to see more Native engineers, more Native architects, more Natives driving trucks, you name it."

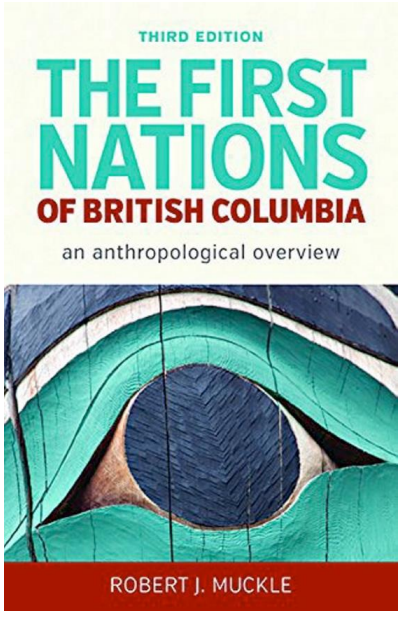
Meanwhile, he challenges the stereotypes in his jokes, like the one about Ottawa's annual Tulip Festival. He says a black friend complained that Black History Month is in February, the shortest month. Kelly said to him, "We get National Aboriginal *Day*. Tulips get a week."

Bada bing (played on an aboriginal drum)!

Direct Link: http://ottawacitizen.com/entertainment/local-arts/interview-with-comedian-don-kelly

An objective reference guide to First Nations in B.C.

Dave Obee / Times Colonist
April 19, 2015 05:47 AM



The First Nations of British Columbia, by Robert J. Muckle Photograph By Submitted

The First Nations of British Columbia: An Anthropological Overview;
By Robert J. Muckle;
UBC Press, 184 pp., $27.95

Kwäday Dän Ts'inchi has an important place in British Columbia's history, and is helping to change the way that we look at what life was like here before European contact.

The man, whose name translates into Long Ago Person Found, lived in the northwestern area of what we now call British Columbia, in the 17th, 18th or 19th centuries.

His body was found by hunters on a glacier in Tatshenshini-Alsek Park in 1999. It is considered to be the oldest body with well-preserved soft tissue ever found in North America.

Kwäday Dän Ts'inchi carried evidence, through his possessions as well as the food in his stomach, that he had travelled between the coast and the Interior.

The body was brought to Victoria for scientific analysis at the Royal B.C. Museum. In 2001, with the work finished, it was cremated at Royal Oak Burial Park in Saanich.

The ashes were returned to the Champagne-Aishihik First Nations. They were scattered in the glacier where the body was found.

The information gleaned from Kwäday Dän Ts'inchi helped to provide a much clearer idea of First Nations life a few centuries ago, although it probably prompted more questions than answers.

A brief account of the Kwäday Dän Ts'inchi story is included in this, the third edition of Robert J. Muckle's The First Nations of British Columbia: An anthropological overview.

This is a concise reference work that serves as an introduction to the people, cultures and issues of the First Nations.

Muckle's work tackles some of the negative stereotypes and misconceptions while creating new images of the descendants of the people who were here before Europeans arrived in search of natural resources.

He offers, for example, clarification of terms such as aboriginal, Indian and Indigenous. Some of these words have specific legal meanings, and are used by the provincial and - federal governments.

The book includes a map showing the territories of the major ethnic groups, as well as an extensive list of ethnic groups and First Nations.

It tackles a wide variety of subjects, ranging from archeological sites to the Chinook

language to residential schools and reconciliation. It is all based on anthropology, the study of humans.

Throughout the book, the author has taken an objective, neutral stance, carefully avoiding the potential minefields that have coloured reporting on First Nations over the years.

Muckle recognized that the introduction to First Nations provided by this book would likely lead readers to seek out other sources. To help them find additional information, he provides lists of recommended readings in each chapter.

This book is not perfect; perhaps by the fourth edition, it will include an index. Also, while the text has been extensively rewritten for this edition, more attention could have been paid to eliminating duplication between the main text and the sidebars.

But those are minor concerns. What is more important is that this is a valuable reference work, a guide that could be used to inspire better understanding among all of us.

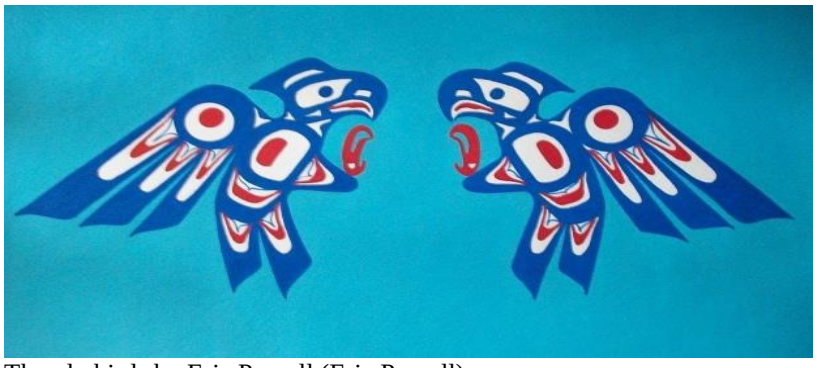
The reviewer is the editor-in-chief of the Times Colonist.

- See more at: http://www.timescolonist.com/life/islander/an-objective-reference-guide-to-first-nations-in-b-c-1.1828389#sthash.yJdQhpMM.dpuf

Indian Art from the Edge project helps First Nations artists showcase their work

The project helps works of art that would normally be ignored get a second chance

By North by Northwest, CBC News Posted: Apr 21, 2015 10:48 AM PT Last Updated: Apr 21, 2015 10:48 AM PT



Thunderbirds by Eric Parnell (Eric Parnell)

Not all painters and sculptors can have their work shown in a gallery, but now a B.C. project aims to help First Nations artists who are down on their luck to have their work promoted and protected.

Indian Art From The Edge was started by Marylee Stephenson after she saw the potential of stay-at-home native artists whose work was rarely seen.



Marylee Stephenson started Indian Art from the Edge to promote the works of First Nations artists who weren't being featured. (ndianartfromtheedge.com)

"It's called Indian Art From The Edge because over time I had met artists who were often homeless or semi-homeless and in spite of that did beautiful work," the sociologist and entrepreneur told North by Northwest's Sheryl MacKay.

Stephenson works closely with the First Nation artists she features to aid them in having their work featured in galleries, shown to collectors, and even purchased.

She says the idea stemmed from a lack of protection for the artists themselves.

"One of the things that really bothered me was maybe they would sell a really nice design and then lose all control of it. They'd see their work on some fancy shirt or some cup and have no royalties over it."

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/indian-art-from-the-edge-project-helps-first-nations-artists-showcase-their-work-1.3039748

A day at the museum... building Inuit qajaqs

Eric McNair-Landry constructing traditional qajaqs with hand tools

LISA GREGOIRE, April 22, 2015 - 12:10 pm



Eric McNair-Landry and Reid McLachlan measure deck beams for 'Q is for Qajaq' exhibit at the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa. (PHOTO BY MARTIN LIPMAN/STUDENTS ON ICE)



Kayaks used by Earic McNair-Landry and three others — his sister Sarah, his partner Katherine Breen and friend Eric Boomer — completed a 1,000-km kayak journey across Baffin Island in 2013. (HANDOUT PHOTO)

OTTAWA — Most people expect to see dead things when they go to a museum, but until April 26, visitors to the Canadian Museum of Nature in Ottawa will see a live person from Iqaluit doing an ancient thing.

Eric McNair-Landry, in partnership with Geoff Green of Students on Ice, is at the museum to make three traditional kayaks to educate the public about the art and to remind visitors about an amazing piece of seafaring technology invented by Inuit.

“We may have added beer holders and sit-on-top things and fishing poles, but we really haven’t improved the kayak substantially. The original design is an Inuit design and it’s phenomenal to see how efficient and wonderful that kayak is to paddle,” said McNair-Landry who grew up in Iqaluit as the son of Iqaluit-based Arctic adventurer and outfitter Matty McNair, who runs Northwinds.

“Inuit people have given Canada and the rest of the world something really wonderful and yet they’re not necessarily credited for it.”

It’s called “Q is for Qajaq,” with a nod to the traditional Inuktitut spelling. As part of the project, McNair-Landry and a team of volunteers will build three different styles of kajak — Kimmirut-Northern Labrador, East Coast Baffin, and Greenlandic — using wood and hand tools.

Once the kayaks are built for the public to enjoy, they will be disassembled, packed up and used on this summer’s Students on Ice ship-born expedition, which will travel from Greenland, through the Northwest Passage and eventually to Resolute Bay.

Students on board the annual polar expedition will be tasked with putting the three vessels together and then testing them out in Arctic waters to see how the different styles compare in terms of agility, speed and comfort.

McNair-Landry is passionate about kayaks and has made three already. He doesn’t use seal skins, the way Inuit used to — he’s not even sure he could make one like that float — but instead sews nylon for the shell and covers it in polyurethane waterproofing.

But the design is ancient, invented and perfected by Inuit who used driftwood, planks from old abandoned boats and ships, willows and even bones and antlers to fashion the frames, McNair-Landry said.

British explorers, who visited the Arctic hundreds of years ago, wrote about how fast and maneuverable this floating invention was — able to pass sailing ships in full clip, they reported.

Inuit used two main types of kayaks, said McNair-Landry, who has studied their history and compiled traditional knowledge on the subject.

There was one which was large and fast — five to seven metres long — and were used inland and in coastal areas for hunting, he said.

Then there was the shorter, lighter one — only about three or four metres long — which would be transported by qamutiq to the floe edge for animal retrieval. It was stable, but not very fast, he said — designed to be transportable.

McNair-Landry said he's been enjoying meeting museum visitors and answering their questions since the public demonstration began on the floor in the museum's mammal gallery April 14.

They've asked good questions, he said, such as how did Inuit find wood on a treeless landscape and how kayaks differ from that other Aboriginal invention — the canoe.

And sure, it would probably be better for an Inuk to be doing this job, he says, but most Inuit he knows and meets are pleased that he is reviving the tradition, teaching others the craft and celebrating Inuit ingenuity.

"I don't pretend to be an expert. I've spent a lot of time in Nunavut but it's definitely not part of my traditional roots. For me, I'm just trying to get the ball rolling, get people interested in kayaking, in any way, shape or form," he said.

"The moment I lose my job to an Inuit person, I would be very glad at that. That's the goal, to have more Inuit take up this tradition and to continue to remember it."

McNair-Landry and three others — his sister Sarah, his partner Katherine Breen and friend Eric Boomer — completed a 1,000-km kayak journey across Baffin Island in 2013.

When they arrived at their destination in Cape Dorset, he said local residents gave them a warm welcome.

"People were really proud that we had attempted this, we lived out on the land, it was something we could both relate to all of a sudden. It was a method of building bridges," he said.

"There's traditional kayaking and there's modern kayaking so for us, we're bridging from the modern side back."

He made another interesting point before our conversation wound down.

"I mean we called it an expedition but back then, they just called it life," he said, laughing. "We felt like we were hanging on by our fingernails and people back in the day, that's just what they did, year after year, that's how the lived."

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674a_day_at_the_museum..._building_inuit_qajaqs/

Nunavut MP says $5.7M sealing fund is "huge for Inuit"

Money will build Inuit seal industry, create certification system for EU market

JIM BELL, April 23, 2015 - 7:00 am



Ring seals lie on the dock in Qikiqtarjuaq. On April 21, the federal government announced $5.7 million over five years to help Inuit sealers gain access to the European Union market. (FILE PHOTO)

If there's one new item in Finance Minister Joe Oliver's April 21 budget that Nunavut MP Leona Aglukkaq wants to talk about, it's this: $5.7 million in new funding over five years aimed at helping Inuit seal products gain access to the European Union market.

"In my view, this is huge for Inuit," Aglukkaq said.

She said the money will help create a certification system for Inuit seal products that would allow them to be sold within European Union member states.

And it will also be used to help Inuit across the Canadian Arctic start small businesses based on sealing and find new markets for seal products.

To do that, Aglukkaq said the federal government will work with Inuit organizations in Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, Nunavik and Labrador, as well as with entities like the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board and the Government of Nunavut.

"This will allow us to establish operations in Canada's North to market our products. We hope to move quickly, working closely with Inuit… all groups," she said.

That includes working with those bodies "in identifying how our communities can be able to set up to produce products for the European market."

The EU ban on the importation of seal products, passed by the European Parliament in 2009, contained an exemption for indigenous peoples.

But Canadian Inuit had no practical way of taking advantage of that exemption.

To fix that, on Oct. 10, 2014, the federal government announced that they struck a deal with the EU to work out a certification system that would allow Canadian indigenous seal products into the EU market.

Under that arrangement, the two sides agreed to the following:

• ensure nothing prevents the participation of Canadian non-indigenous persons and organizations from processing, manufacturing and marketing Canadian indigenous seal products;

• explore possibilities for supporting indigenous communities and traditional ways of life through capacity building and the exchange of best practices;

• explore how indigenous communities can benefit from the new opportunities opened up by the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement to develop their economic, social and environmental potential; and,

• ensure that indigenous seal products imported into the EU are not limited due to their type or intended purpose.

That announcement came just a couple of weeks after the Canadian government, on Sept. 26, 2014, had announced the completion of the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with EU.

And last month, a new proposed regulation from the EU Commission on trade in seal products included a commitment to develop a system in co-operation with Canadian authorities that would ensure Canadian Inuit have improved access to the EU market that would include seal meat exports.

Now, the $5.7 million in funding will help the federal government, and Inuit organizations, puts some meat on the bones of those previous undertakings.

“I’m very, very happy to see, for the first time in Canadian history actually, funding set aside for helping secure new markets for Canadian seal products and to support our sealers,” Aglukkaq said.

One group that was not happy with the CETA deal was the Canadian Sealers Association, which represents non-indigenous sealers in the Atlantic provinces.

“It clearly demonstrates that their understanding of the east coast seal harvest is so narrow and misguided that it is destroying an industry that had been in existence for hundreds of years and is an integral part of life for all rural people especially in Newfoundland and Labrador,” the group said in a statement in the fall of 2014.

But Terry Audla, the president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, said April 21 that he’s happy with the $5.7 million in funding.

“Inuit look forward to working with the federal government to develop a certification system for products derived from Inuit seal hunting.

“Indeed, only through the active participation of Inuit in this process can we overcome the inadequacies of the exemption for Inuit products outlined in the legislation that banned entry of Canadian seal products to European markets in 2009,” Audla said.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavut_mp_says_5.7m_sealing_fund_is_huge_for_inuit/

Aboriginal Business & Finance

Nunavut miners hear Inuit businesses face “impossible logistical challenges”

"You'd think the Inuit business community would be thriving"

JANE GEORGE, April 16, 2015 - 4:14 pm



Inuit businesses in Nunavut don't have it easy, Charlie Lyall said in an April 16 presentation to the Nunavut Mining Symposium in Iqaluit. (PHOTO BY JANE GEORGE)

There’s lots of mining activity going on in Nunavut’s Kitikmeot region — but Charlie Lyall of Taloyoak sees big problems for local and regional Inuit businesses.

“You’d think the Inuit business community would be thriving,” Lyall said in his pithy presentation April 16 to the Nunavut Mining Symposium on the business potential of mining in Nunavut.

Inuit businesses should be thriving, however, money just goes sloshing out of the territory to the South, said Lyall, a former president and CEO of the Kitikmeot Corp., now involved in many joint-venture businesses, including Matrix, which provides a variety of services mining and mineral exploration companies.

Lyall had lots of criticism to throw around during his talk — including some at the administrators of the Nunavummi Nangminiqaqtunik Ikajuti, or NNI — the policy that sets out how the Government of Nunavut should comply with Article 24 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement in giving preferential treatment to Inuit- and Nunavut-owned businesses when awarding procurement contracts.

Lyall said he'd like to see the end of paperwork that businesses must file annually with the NNI to prove their Inuit status.

"There's got to be a simpler way," he said.

Inuit businesses in the smaller communities, like his home town of Taloyoak, population 850, already face "impossible logistical changes," which include poor telecommunications.

"We still use fax machines," he said. "Believe it or not, it's out of necessity."

And there's the winter weather, which can keep people at home for days while their telephones ring and business messages pile up in their offices.

Sometimes supplies needed for projects don't make it in, either.

"If materials don't make it in on the ship, the project becomes a multi-year campaign" — and one with skyrocketing costs and low profit, Lyall said.

At the same time, Nunavut businesses are supposed to compete with business with international links and good access to services, which don't require a $2,000 airline ticket to get out of town.

In Nunavut, you can pay five times more for an envelope than a stamp — and that's if you can find an envelope, Lyall added.

Yet mining and other activities in Nunavut must benefit Nunavummiut because "our future depends on it."

Even Nunavut's largest community, Iqaluit, population 7,250, faces its challenges, said its economic development officer, Joamie Eegeesiak, during the same session.

Despite the city's 400 businesses, a lack of housing, services and the high cost of shipping and materials make it hard for businesses to survive, she said.

The Nunavut Mining Symposium wraps up April 16 with an evening gala and awards ceremony.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavut_mining_symposium_hears_inuit_businesses_face_impossible_logist/

Regina a good place to start for First Nation businesses

By Kerry Benjoe, Leader-Post April 23, 2015

First Nation businesses are popping up around the city.

Kendal Netmaker, CEO and founder of Neechie Gear, said the time is right to open a Regina store.

Last summer, Tatanka Boutique began carrying a limited selection of Neechie Gear merchandise.

Netmaker said the demand for his athletic wear was great so he began thinking about setting up a bigger shop in Regina.

As fate would have it, Tatanka Boutique was looking for someone to share its store space and approached Netmaker. He jumped at the opportunity.

"It was funny because I was thinking, 'How am I going to get into Regina?' " said the Saskatoonbased business owner. "Then within a week they called and said this was an opportunity they had. It was kind of the same idea I had in the back of my head."

Half of the store will be Neechie Gear and the other half will remain Tatanka Boutique located at 2156 Albert St.

"There will be way more product selection, more designs, more sizes and so on," said Netmaker.

The official opening of the new Regina store is to take place on May 1. Although he is a businessman and entrepreneur first, he believes running a successful business and being in the public has other positive spinoffs.

"I've never seen so many people in the last five years wanting to start businesses or are starting a business right now," said Netmaker. "I feel we have had that effect on encouraging entrepreneurs in Saskatchewan and around Canada. It's good to see that."

Joely BigEagle-Kequatooway, owner and artist for Tatanka Boutique, is happy Netmaker has agreed to share store space and overhead costs.

As a new business owner, she is still learning the ropes and wants to do what she can to ensure her store remains a viable business.

"It's also a good opportunity to get mentored by him as well," BigEagle-Kequatooway. "He's done a lot more. He's more aggressive in marketing and promoting himself as an entrepreneur."

She said the feedback from the community has been positive because her store promotes and supports local First Nations artists. BigEagle-Kequatooway hopes Neechie Gear will bring more foot traffic into the store, which will mean more people at Tatanka Boutique.

She said it's important to have First Nation and Metis businesses in and around the city.

"We are a rising demographic and that should be reflected in our community," said BigEagle-Kequatooway. "Not just as professionals and academics but in our business community as well. There should really be at least 30 per cent First Nation and Metis businesses in Regina because that is our projected population."

She believes one way to ensure aboriginal businesses stay in business is to support one another. BigEagle-Kequatooway said Stewart Klyne is set to open SK Books at 919C Albert St. on May 2. She said it's great to see other aboriginal people taking the plunge and opening businesses.

"It's good to support one another because we in turn support our community and our community isn't just the First Nations and Metis community - it's everybody," said BigEagle-Kequatooway. "If we support one another then that ensures other business pop up."

Direct Link:
http://www.leaderpost.com/Regina+good+place+start+First+Nation+businesses/10996201/story.html

Aboriginal Community Development

In Canada's Inuit Territory of Nunavut: Nanook of the North on the Looney Front - Part 1

Posted: 04/19/2015 10:27 am EDT Updated: 04/19/2015 10:59 am EDT

As the last blogs were on Greenland in the depths of winter, here is a series on the Inuit territory of Nunavut, northern Canada in the depths of early April from a trip I took a couple of years back.

The 1,303-mile flight from Ottawa to Iqaluit, Nunavut's capital, is almost due north as the Canada goose -- and the little 75-seat CRJ 705 twin-jet -- flies.



Nunavut map, Iqaluit half way down on right - maps Canada

There are even individual video screens in the seat backs with subtitles in the squiggly Inuit syllabary script looking just like some advanced geometrical equation.



How to write stop in Inuktikut

But alas and alack, I have the Queen of Flatulence sitting right in front of me and she's just let fly a monster. And now a little Inuit child, the most beautiful little girl you could imagine, with large almond eyes and glorious lank hair, turns out to have some form of

autism, and is vigorously banging on the window and knock-knock-knocking on the seat in front of her.

We're flying over a crazy quilt of gleaming white frozen lakes and ponds when fair Lady Wind Tunnel in front launches a silent but most deadly scud, and the lovely little girl to the left starts screaming and moaning.



Baffin island outside Iqaluit

The crazy quilt gives way to wall-to-wall blinding whiteness, the pilot tells us we are now passing over the North Quebec hydro-power plant, and fair Lady Wind Tunnel, not to be outdone, lets slip the mother of all winds.

By the time we pass over the top of Hudson Bay, the little girl is ferociously cleaning the windows with thousands of tissues and Daddy and Mummy are purring 'Good girl, what a good job!'



Another view

At last we approach Baffin Island, the world's fifth largest at nearly 196,000 square miles, the wind maker has gone dormant, the little girl is quiescent, and the snowy plains and

valleys and straggling bluff-topping crescents of Iqaluit's little houses soar upwards to meet us.

The Vikings apparently got to Baffin 1,000 years before me and called it Helluland, but the first thing I find out in Iqaluit is what a difference a 'U' makes. In the Inuit language, Inuktitut, it means 'place of many fish,' but avoid at all costs the English custom of putting a 'U' after the 'Q.' That way it means 'dirty arsehole.'



Part of Iqaluit - without the extra 'u'

The town, which started out life as an American air base called Frobisher Bay in 1942, is now home to over 6,600 people, about a sixth of the population of the vast 808,185-square-mile Nunavut territory, taking up two thirds of Arctic Canada.



Another Iqaluit view

It is basically without charm, sights or much else. There are lines of low wooden buildings, a black-panelled four-storey territorial parliament building that's meant to recall the traditional Inuit igloo and kayak - though where, how etc. escapes me - and a visitors' centre and little museum showing Inuit traditions, history, art and implements.



Territorial parliament

This includes an exhibition called 'We were so far away' about the Inuit children who were taken away and put into residential schools where they had their language and traditions literally beaten out of them.

Forget all the tourist book crap about 'our beautiful capital,' but then you don't come to Nunavut to see towns and cities, but the wilds that exist beyond them.



No time for boating

The roads and streets are covered with ice and snow in varying degrees of white, off-white, brown and deep doodoo colour. Everything is very expensive - a small soup and midget chicken sandwich with a cup of tea comes to $20 with tip. You can get caribou or muskox burgers, and a full meal can set you back $60 or more.



An Iqaluit street

It's about -18 Celsius (0 Fahrenheit), with a wind chill factor making it feel like -30 C (-22 F), so regular underwear, thermal long-johns, long sleeve vest, shirt, jeans, sweater, fleece, parka, gloves and hat are in order for a little walkabouts to the blinding whiteness of the corrugated ridges and humps of frozen Frobisher Bay.



Towards Frobisher Bay

There's total, all-pervasive silence but for the crunchy-crunch of your own frozen footsteps - until the angry roar of snowmobiles drowns them out.

I'm trying to find Sylvia Grinnell state park and I seem to have got on the wrong side of the airport. Retracing my steps and finding nothing on the other side of the airport, I'm told I was right all along. So I toddle back again. By now it's gone 5 p.m., it's getting appreciably colder and I'm wrapping up even more.



Frobisher Bay

I've added a neck warmer, a balaclava and my parka's hood to my top regions, closing up the balaclava so that only my eyes are visible - at last in full terrorist mode, Onan bin Laden himself.



Another view

Now disaster strikes. I have this desire to pee that I can't refuse. How the hell do you get it out through long-johns and all those layers? I eventually succeed, and now a flock of dirty black viciously-beaked ravens are circling like vultures. Ugggh, a pecker pecked!

I resume my walk, but now minuscule icicles have formed on my eyelashes and they're sparkling in the blinding rays of the setting sun, totally dazzling me. I come to the end of the road, and I'm still lost - no Sylvia Grinnell park, even if there are magnificent views of frozen Frobisher Bay.



Hunting for the park

Sylvia, by the way, was the daughter of a friend of American explorer Charles Hall who journeyed here with Inuit assistance in 1861 and was the first non-Inuit to realize that Frobisher's Strait was actually a bay, and not the Northwest Passage to China. I think I must have reached China by now.



Half way to China



Practically in China

To cap it all, the pièce de résistance of a wonderful afternoon, I'm seized by a violent fit of sneezing, can't remove my balaclava in time and have turned myself into a walking IED, a personified improvised explosive device as I beat a retreat back to town, leaving Sylvia for another day.



Turning back to town



Almost there

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mike-arkus/in-canadas-inuit-territor_b_6880952.html

Canada's Aboriginal Population: Growing, but Troubled

By Alistair MacDonald and Paul Vieira 10:05 am ET Apr 20, 2015



Canada's fastest-growing demographic is also its poorest.

That has some economists and former lawmakers worried about the effects of an expanding underclass on the wider economy. It is also expected to give aboriginals increased sway in protesting for their own agendas, such as against some of the resource development that Ottawa has deemed a priority for the Canadian economy.

Aboriginals currently accounts for 4.3% of the Canadian population, and the figure is expect to grow to 5.3% of all Canadians by 2030. The aboriginal population increased by 20.1% between 2006 and 2011, compared with 5.2% for the rest of Canada.

In only one other western country, New Zealand, do aboriginals form such a large and growing section of the population. The native population of the U.S. stands at 1.7% of all Americans, and is expected to rise to 2.3% by 2030.

By every measure of social welfare, from rates of infant mortality to literacy to suicide, this fast-growing group remains on the margins of Canadian society. According to government data, the aboriginal unemployment was 22% on reserves in 2011 when compared to 7.5% in the wider population, and they earned around half the average wage. Aboriginals make more close to a quarter of Canada's prison population and in 2006 were three times more likely to be assaulted than most Canadians. In the U.S., native Americans are twice as likely to be assaulted and one and a half times likely to be unemployed as the average.

Aboriginal growth is particularly concentrated in Canada's resource-rich, fast-growing prairie provinces. By 2017, about 42% of the First Nations population in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan will be under the age of 30, against 20% in the non-Aboriginal community, according to the MacDonald Laurier Institute, a think tank. These three provinces, which have unemployment rates of 5% and below, often complain of labor shortages.

Canada's aboriginal population is young, with 28% aged 14 and under compared with 16.5% in the rest of the population.

“If we are not able to work out agreements that involve aboriginal interests seriously, we are going to have a continuing problem,” said Joe Clark, who was Canada’s prime minister in 1979-80.

Direct Link: http://blogs.wsj.com/canadarealtime/2015/04/20/canadas-aboriginal-population-growing-but-troubled/

First Nations researcher honoured for work

Samantha WRIGHT ALLEN / Prince George Citizen
April 22, 2015 07:54 AM



Antonia Mills, a UNBC First Nations Studies professor, received the Paz Buttedahl Career Achievement Award for ongoing research with the non-academic community. - Handout photo.

A local First Nations professor will be getting an early retirement gift after being recognized with a career achievement award for the impact of her research on the non-academic community.

"I felt utterly humbled," said Antonia Mills, who has been teaching at the University of Northern B.C. for more than 20 years.

The Confederation of University Faculty Associations of British Columbia announced Mills won the Paz Buttedahl Career Achievement Award in March.

"My goal for my career has been to try to inform students and the public about the importance and the value of first nations perspectives of the need to look after the environmental integrity of everything and see the spiritual component in everything," said Mills, adding there's still work to do in that regard.

Mills research focuses on First Nations land claims, religion and law, and reincarnation beliefs and cases.

The latter has been a lifelong interest, spurred by research with the Beaver Indians in northeast B.C. back in 1964 as a Harvard PhD canadidate. Since then she's published two books (with another on the way) and variety of articles on the subject of reincarnation.

"I find it's just very, very, very deep topic," said Mills, who continued her fieldwork with the Beaver Indians throughout her career. "I was surprised and impressed because I hadn't known that that was a part of indigenous peoples' world view previously.

"It feels like a real privilege to get to document the specific cases that keep on happening. That's one of the reasons that the book I've been working on hasn't been finished," she said with a laugh.

The case of a Gitxan boy sticks out to her for his strong memory of a past life.

"He's come back as his great grandfather," she said. "He also had a birthmark - that's another feature of some of the cases - a birthmark that related to a wound on his great grandfather, but just had so, so much to say as a little kid."

Reincarnation, she said is regarded by First Nations as a fundamental mechanism in the whole cosmos.

"The importance of taking the life of any fish or any moose or any other kind of animal or any plant, so that it will want to come back and feed you again. To take it with respect, that's an essential part of the worldview," said Mills, who helped launch experiential learning courses at UNBC that have built a traditional dugout cottonwood canoe and a Dakelh-style pit house.

Mills has also travelled to India to research reincarnation. With indigenous communities she said people most often come back into the same family. Some communities have stronger cases than others. Some First Nations were discouraged from the belief, but even with that outside pressure, it didn't always produce the desired result, Mills said.

"It's really interesting the extent to which many First Nations don't see any contradiction whatsoever between now being Christian and continuing to experience reincarnation cases."

For those who resist the concept of reincarnation, Mills refers to the research including that of now dead Ian Stevenson, a pioneer on the subject.

"There's a lot of material that people can look at to assess the kind of things that are going on. I did a study comparing children who remember previously lives and children who have imaginary playmates," she said.

"It's something that emerges in non-native cultures as well but often people don't know how to interpret it because it hasn't been a part of the western culture for so very long."

Mills is set to retire in June. A celebration is planned for her on Thursday at 3:30 p.m. in the Administration Building Atrium.

See more at: http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/news/local-news/first-nations-researcher-honoured-for-work-1.1830931#sthash.dw6LZlTn.dpuf

Aboriginal life in Canadian cities focus of national event in Edmonton

By Cailynn Klingbeil, Edmonton Journal April 22, 2015



Patti LaBoucane-Benson, director of research, training, and communication for Native Counselling Services of Alberta

EDMONTON - Speakers from across Canada gather in Edmonton Thursday evening to talk about aboriginal life in cities.

Organizers hope the event will spark a broader conversation that lasts for more than one night.

Nine people, including an architect, a comedian, and former Ontario premier Bob Rae, will speak at the sold-out The Walrus Talks Aboriginal City, presented by Enterprise Edmonton, at the Shaw Conference Centre.

“The hope is that people leave thinking ‘I never thought about it that way,’” said David Leonard, director of events and special projects at The Walrus Foundation.

The event marks the first time the national foundation, which publishes the Walrus magazine, has hosted a talk in Edmonton.

The events in cities across Canada are a chance to take existing national conversations and "stretch" them, Leonard said. Previous topics have included how to animate a city, vice and creativity.

Organizers say the aboriginal city theme is fitting for Edmonton, a place with Canada's second largest urban aboriginal population that just marked the one year anniversary of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's visit to Edmonton. The commission was a component of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Its mandate was to inform people about what happened in Indian Residential Schools.

"It's meant to build upon these very important events that have happened previously and ask what's next?" organizer Lisa Baroldi, creative economy and aboriginal lead with Enterprise Edmonton, said of the Thursday event.

Baroldi said she has noticed people are more willing to share, learn and listen since the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's visit. It's hoped that continues once the speeches are over Thursday.

"We're providing a space where 1,200 people who have never been in a room together are coming together," Baroldi said.

"When people get together in Edmonton, it's fertile territory for a project or initiative or company to come out of it."

The event also includes an indigenous art show and a display area featuring 15 innovative local projects around the aboriginal city theme.

Patti LaBoucane-Benson, director of research, training and communication for Native Counselling Services of Alberta, will talk about the over-representation of aboriginals in the criminal justice system.

"How can we imagine reconciliation in that context?" she asked. "Good legislation allows for partnerships between the government and aboriginal organizations to create meaningful interventions that stop the intergenerational cycles of violence."

Ginger Gosnell-Myers, an aboriginal planner for the City of Vancouver, is delivering a talk titled Who do you think we are?

"Generally, when people think about the urban aboriginal community, they think about the negative outcomes that aboriginal people face because of the history of residential schools," Gosnell-Myers said.

"But we've changed so much. We're learning so much about ourselves, and in that process we're growing stronger and taking charge of growing our community."

Direct Link:
http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Aboriginal+life+Canadian+cities+focus+national+event+Edmonton/10994901/story.html

Hundreds flee Northern Ontario First Nation amid flood threat



CTVNews.ca Staff
Published Thursday, April 23, 2015 4:27AM EDT
Last Updated Thursday, April 23, 2015 10:11PM EDT

The threat of flooding is once again forcing the residents of a remote Northern Ontario First Nation to flee their homes.

Hundreds of vulnerable Kashechewan residents have already registered with the Red Cross in Kapuskasing, Ont. The rising Albany River is threatening to flood the First Nation for the fourth consecutive year.

One of the evacuees, Gary Wesley, told CTV Northern Ontario that he's coping with the situation, but it's "difficult" for others.

"They're having a hard time. Many of them want to go home," he said.

Another resident, Peter Lazarus, said the repeated evacuations are "devastating."

"Every year, we have to face this evacuation, and it isn't supposed to be like that," he said.

Nearly every spring, the flood waters from the ice-jammed Albany River destroy homes, schools and businesses in Kashechewan.

Chief Derek Stephen told The Canadian Press that the community spent $21 million on the evacuation last year, and millions more on flood-related repairs. About 350 people still live in Kapuskasing because of last year's flood.

"We cannot continue to live this way," Stephen said, adding it's time to move the First Nation to higher ground.

Charlie Angus, the MP for the region, said repeated flooding could result in a "catastrophe."

"This community is so frustrated," he said. "We had an agreement 10 years ago, to build 10 houses a year and to move them on to higher ground.

"Maybe we will escape a catastrophic flood, maybe we won't but we never know, until we are there, and we don't know if that dyke wall will hold."

The office of Bernard Valcourt, the minister of aboriginal affairs and northern development, said the government is working to help the residents of Kashechewan.

Wesley said it will be at least another seven to 10 days before residents learn whether it's safe to return to the community. He said people are used to the evacuations and dealing with frustration.

"We've been going through this for how many years now."

With reports from CTV's Peter Akman, CTV Northern Ontario and The Canadian Press

Direct Link: http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/hundreds-flee-northern-ontario-first-nation-amid-flood-threat-1.2340739

Aboriginal Crime, Justice & Law Enforcement

Métis prof makes a change

Could be Manitoba's oldest lawyer called to bar

By: Alexandra Paul

Posted: 04/21/2015 3:00 AM


Paul Chartrand, 71, is embarking on a whole new career.

So what does a 71-year-old aboriginal rights professor do when he packs in the books and eyes a tidy retirement in his childhood hometown?

For the last couple of years, indigenous and Métis rights expert Paul Chartrand has been writing books in St. Laurent, a Métis town 90 kilometres northwest of Winnipeg, and advising friends, many of whom include Canada's indigenous leaders.


Paul Chartrand (right) with his new boss, Norman Boudreau. Chartrand will work part-time at Boudreau Law at a time when courts are defining Métis rights. (WAYNE GLOWACKI / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

"Semi-retired. I've always done a bit of consulting work," Chartrand said Monday in an interview about his decision to start a whole new career in his 70s.

"I haven't been inactive. I always write. I'm working on three books at the moment. There are always things to do," Chartrand said.

As of next week, Chartrand will also be a practising lawyer, arguing indigenous-rights and land-claims cases before judges.

While statistics weren't immediately available, Chartrand could well be one of the oldest lawyers ever called to the bar in Manitoba.

"I'm 71 now. I'll be 72 this summer. I've had a longish career, and it's taken me to a number of places -- Australia for almost a decade, and I was a teacher before that. I always enjoyed teaching, but I always wondered about litigation. My colleagues who practise law tell me: 'Practise law. Get down in the trenches and do the hard work.' "

Chartrand has about 30 years of experience teaching indigenous law and policy, from the university level to the United Nations and the Organization of American States, according to biographies posted online.

Chartrand's call to the bar will be unusual because his experience as a law professor means he qualifies for a rarely used section of provincial legislation that exempts him from the normal requirement to article at a law firm first. There is a job waiting for him with Boudreau Law, a firm with 13 lawyers, established by lawyer Norman Boudreau in 2013 to fill a demand for aboriginal law in Manitoba.

"This is going to take our firm to a very different level of expertise. Paul brings to the firm what any firm that specializes would love. He brings knowledge, expertise and depth... What I'd like Paul to be is our senior counsel, our go-to guy. He's already a walking encyclopedia," Boudreau said.

"I opened Boudreau Law 18 months ago. Now we have two locations. Thirteen lawyers out of that six are either First Nations or First Nations descent. One day, Paul says to me, he was retiring and he said, 'I might want to practise.'

"I said 'Paul, if you want to practise, I would love you to come. If you can article under me, you will be the oldest articling student I've ever had.'

"But he doesn't have to article. He's going to be called to be a lawyer straight away because he was a law professor," Boudreau said.

Chances are, next week Chartrand may cast his mind back about 50 years to a sociology course he took at the University of Winnipeg.

"It was about a thing called an occupational scale and I remember this so very clearly," Chartrand said. "Canadians were asked how they ranked different professions. At the bottom? Trapper. My father was a trapper, trapped muskrats. Right at the top? Barrister... That's just a little story I think about sometimes because of where I'm from.

"There were no indigenous people when I went to university, and I never thought of studying law when I was here. It just wasn't something that was done. Teaching was enough of a leap by itself, getting a professional job like that," Chartrand said.

For those who know Chartrand, his breadth of knowledge about indigenous law and Métis rights is legendary -- he speaks Michif, French and English. His decision to practise law comes at a time when courts are defining Métis rights.

Chartrand is a graduate of the Manitoba Teachers College, the University of Winnipeg, the Queensland University of Technology law school in Australia and the University of Saskatchewan College of Law.

He served on the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, authored some 60 publications on indigenous law and policy, including two books, and headed up the native studies department at the University of Manitoba. Interestingly, he's also been inducted into Manitoba's Baseball Hall of Fame.

And will he keep lawyer's hours?

"This is not jumping into a pit of lions. It's on a part-time basis. I'm keeping my hand in."

Direct Link: http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/metis-prof-makes-a-change-300753911.html

Aboriginal Education & Youth

Elders in Metro Vancouver schools help foster 'empathy and compassion'

Teacher-elder collaborations remain limited because of narrow curriculum, funding barriers

By Tara Maghsoudnia and Meylin Zink Yi, CBC News Posted: Apr 17, 2015 5:00 AM PT Last Updated: Apr 17, 2015 8:35 AM PT



Roberta Price, an elder from the Snuneynuxw and Cowichan First Nations, teaches her traditional knowledge in schools throughout Metro Vancouver. (Burnaby School District 41)

Holding up her eagle feather, Roberta Price opens the conversation at Manoah Steves Elementary School in Richmond, B.C., with the ceremony of introduction. This is what she does to mark the beginning of her cultural teachings.

"Ceremony is what makes us come together respectfully and politely," she said.

The 60-year-old elder from Snuneynuxw and Cowichan First Nations has been sharing her traditional knowledge with students in schools throughout Metro Vancouver for the past 28 years.

"In social studies, aboriginal issues are taught in a very surface kind of way. We are not going into depth in a lot of issues," Vancouver teacher Alain Raoul said.

Price has been speaking to Raoul's Social Justice 12 students for the past five years.

"Roberta intertwines her personal stories with aspects of aboriginal culture that are so important."

Raoul is one of a small number of teachers welcoming aboriginal elders into Metro Vancouver schools, as a way to introduce aboriginal content into B.C. curriculum — and educators say such classroom innovations could become more widespread if the Ministry of Education and school boards did their homework on how to support them.

Increasing awareness

Roberta Price's journey to classroom teaching started with her own two children, when she moved with her family from a small community to Richmond in the early 80s.

Even though Richmond seemed like a multicultural city to Price, she felt her children were facing discrimination.

"I saw the way people in the school treated my sons," said Price.



Roberta Price teaches grade 6 and 7 students at Manoah Steves Elementary in Richmond, B.C. (Meylin Zink Yi)

"The mother bear rose up in me, and I thought — I did not get treated well in this system and my sons are not going to be treated like I was."

As a way to fight what she felt was prejudice toward her children and the lack of support for aboriginal students, Price began volunteering on parent advisory committees in Richmond schools.

Price feels educators today are more open and eager to incorporate aboriginal content in their programs, and younger generations are more welcoming towards First Nations' role in history.

"When I first went in I was not welcomed by the majority. But, people had to retire, and in comes that generation with newer ideas, with no entrenched beliefs," she said.

Raoul was aiming to increase the awareness of his students about aboriginal cultures and history, and was introduced to Price by a colleague. He believes students often don't understand they are part of Canada's colonial history.

"Empathy and compassion are sometimes the hardest to convey to students who are part of this history, but don't understand it or — in a worst case scenario — have stereotypes," he said.

Thomas Froh, a social studies teacher at Horizons — an alternative school in Richmond, has also collaborated with Price in his classroom.

"Roberta has a very calm influence, certainly as a First Nations educator, but really just as a person," he said.

"She is actually quite skillful in how to deal with students and their different questions of sensitive nature … she is very open to the conversation."

Obstacles to teacher-elder collaborations

While some teachers may be keen to work with aboriginal elders as a way to "indigenize" classrooms, educators agree teacher-elder collaborations remain fraught with difficulties.

The challenges begin, say Froh and Raoul, with the overwhelming amount of curriculum teachers have to cover, which makes it hard to find time to fit elders in.


Thomas Froh, a teacher at Horizons, speaks to his students about aboriginal issues. (Tara Maghsoudnia)

"There is so much to get through, and we use that as an excuse for not covering certain things." said Froh.

Another problem, according to Susan Tatoosh, executive director of Aboriginal Friendship Centre, is some teachers and principals avoid including aboriginal elders' knowledge in the classrooms because of the complexities involved in the process.

"It's easy to brush it aside and put it on the back burner," said Tatoosh.

"Dedicated teachers who recognize the importance of it will continue to reach out."

Tatoosh says finding an elder, or financial compensation for elders' time, are often troublesome issues.

The Vancouver School Board (VSB) and the Aboriginal Friendship Centre have a contract to connect teachers with elders when it's requested, but Tatoosh suggests teachers often aren't aware of that resource.

Funding to pay elders also appears to be limited, says Tatoosh, who recalls that VSB has had a budget assigned for elders' honorarium, but that only lasted one year.

'Now I feel like a treasure, because teachers and children are so excited for me to be able to come into their classes,'- *Roberta Price*

By contrast, Thomas Froh successfully applied for funding for elders' initiatives under three different administrations in Richmond. "When it comes to educating about First Nations, there are a lot of resources out there, from what I can tell," Froh said.

As a result, teachers such as Alain Raoul wind up searching for Elders through personal connections. Raoul fundraises towards the cost of bringing Price into the classroom, rather than asking for help from the school board.

The teaching approaches used by aboriginal elders may also present difficulties.

Monique Giard, aboriginal counselor at the Richmond School District, points out many aboriginal people are still healing from being forcibly removed from their families and cultures. As a consequence, it may be challenging for teachers to find elders who can pass on their knowledge in a positive, non-judgmental way.

Price recalls that, in the beginning, she went into the classrooms feeling anger and pain.

"I just planted myself to make a difference for my boys," she says.

What she received in return brought her to a full circle of healing.

"Now I feel like a treasure, because teachers and children are so excited for me to be able to come into their classes," she said.

The series "siyólexwe: Stories of Elders and Seniors" is produced in partnership with the Reporting in Indigenous Community course at UBC's Graduate School of Journalism.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/elders-in-metro-vancouver-schools-help-foster-empathy-and-compassion-1.3022387

Professor shares life story to help others

By Kerry Benjoe, Leader-Post April 17, 2015



Dr. Sharon Acoose signs books at the launch of her book Arrow Through My Heart. It is a book about her life from life on the street to attaining her doctorate. She is a social work instructor at FNUniv Saskatoon Campus.

REGINA — Life is what you make of it and no one knows that better than Sharon Acoose.

Growing up on the Sakimay First Nation, life was far from easy.

Acoose was just a child when she was sexually abused and that was only the beginning of a troubled life.

After moving to Regina, her life continued on its downward spiral.

Acoose became addicted to drugs and alcohol and she turned to prostitution to survive.

Her lifestyle was not healthy and because of it her two oldest children were apprehended by social services.

A life of drugs, alcohol and prostitution eventually landed Acoose in jail.

That could have been end of her story — but it was not.

“I got tired,” said Acoose. “I got tired of being a whore. I got tired of living that life. I had three kids and two of them I lost. I had a baby when I was 30 and she was my saving grace. I couldn’t keep having kids and losing them.”

The first thing she did was to get sober then went on to get an education, which started with a bachelor then her masters in social work. In order to teach she needed her Ph.D, which she did.

It has not been an easy path since she decided to turn her life around, but she knows it was the right thing.

Acoose, an associate professor of indigenous social work at First Nations University of Canada in Saskatoon, chronicled her story in her book An Arrow Through My Heart, which she launched Friday at the Regina FNUniv campus.

The book is only one part of her Ph.D dissertation, but she felt compelled to share her story with others so she decided to publish it separately.

Acoose began writing her story down as part of her recovery process.

It started as a journal, that turned into chapters and over the years it continued to evolve.

“When I first started writing it, I was still negative,” said Acoose. “Now it’s calm and it’s a release. It’s about how I came out of it and how I was able to sustain my life.”

She believes anyone, regardless of their situation, has the power to make change.

“If I can come from where I came from and be where I’m at now then anyone can do it,” said Acoose. “I’m not perfect and I’m not unique.”

Acoose admitted her nerves got the best of her the days leading up to Friday’s launch because she was bringing her story home.

“I’m free now,” she said. “I can move on and keep teaching and write bigger and better things, maybe. It’s a good thing. I’m happy.”

Although she has a great relationship with her youngest daughter, she still holds out hope for her other children.

“I hope they will love me someday, but it’s up to them,” said Acoose. “I had to forgive myself for what I did to them so I just hope they can forgive me someday.”

She knows those dark days are behind her because now she enjoys waking up each day, living life and teaching.

Direct Link:
http://www.leaderpost.com/Professor+shares+life+story+help+others/10982339/story.html

Joint task force making headway on aboriginal outcomes in Sask.

By Thomas Piller Associate Technical Producer Global News, April 18, 2015 2:39 pm



Two years later, recommendations from a joint task force continue to show promise for aboriginals and non-aboriginals in Saskatchewan.

SASKATOON – Saskatchewan continues to learn from recommendations made by a joint task force (JTF) two years ago. The goal? Improving education and employment outcomes for aboriginals in the province.

The 82-page JTF report was released to the public by the provincial government and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) on April 15, 2013. Métis Nation-Saskatchewan (MN-S) partnered with the province to conduct a separate, parallel consultation.

Members of the task force travelled across the province conducting 83 meetings in 2012-13 to hear success stories from parties on the front lines in order to

provide recommendations that build on those that have the greatest impact in each targeted area on and off reserves.

Members involved with the report agreed the gap in education and employment outcomes between First Nations and Métis people and non-aboriginal people in Saskatchewan is "unacceptable." Recommendations aim to create better circumstances where the Saskatchewan economy and its citizens succeed in a harmonious future.

"Our futures are inextricably linked," according to the JTF report.

In the end, 25 recommendations were made by the task force.

To date, 21 have been responded to by the province's ministries of advanced education, economy, education and Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI). Concrete actions taken so far range from helping more aboriginal students obtain their driver's licence to expanding a Microsoft licensing agreement in classrooms.

The provincial government's approach to the recommendations is a multi-year, multi-ministry plan to improve education outcomes for First Nations and Métis students.

Over the last two provincial budgets, $12 million has been set aside in direct response to the joint task force.

"In the 2015-16 (provincial) budget, there is $6 million, education specifically, to the response of the joint task force and about $5.1 million of that is tagged to ministry of education here … and the remainder is spread across the ministry of economy and advanced education," said Greg Miller, Saskatchewan's associate deputy minister of education.

A number of the initiatives and programs supported by the ministry of education ties into its long-term approach to act on the 10 recommendations specifically directed at it in the final report.

Retired educator Rita Bouvier was one of the three task force panelists and said they assumed good work was being done in education and employment in the province and much of it would continue after the report was tabled.

On Wednesday, Bouvier said she is aware of positive efforts covered by the task force that have been made to work across education systems and jurisdictions.

"We were challenged by the lack of information and politics surrounding the funding for First Nations education systems," said Bouvier.

She chose to highlight the Invitational Shared Services Initiatives (ISSI) as an example.

These 16 ISSI partnerships are bringing the provincial education systems and First Nations education organizations together to support student learning by providing access to such help as speech pathologists, math consultants and graduation coaches.

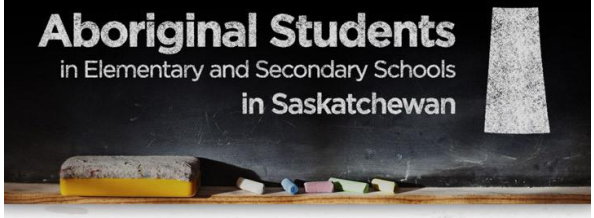
Last month, the ministry of education announced it had allocated $2.4 million in response to this JTF recommendation.

"What we're seeing in these ISSI is really the strength of both systems, the federal system has things to offer, the provincial in vice versa, so we're really encouraged by the work and the leadership that's being provided there as people come together to solve issues for students," said Miller.

"The ISSIs, for example, are supporting work that is not federally funded because we want to be respectful of jurisdiction and the differences between them, however working together to enhance the front line services to kids."

According to the Ministry of Education, First Nations, Métis and Inuit students (FNMI) make up about 20 per cent of the elementary and secondary student population in Saskatchewan.

Aboriginal Students
in Elementary and Secondary Schools in Saskatchewan



First Nations, Metis and Inuit students (FNMI) make up about **20%** of the overall student population in Saskatchewan.

FMNI Student Enrolment

Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 8

2011–12	23,777
2012–13	24,285
2013–14	24,468
2014–15	26,448

Grades 9 to 12

2011–12	15,610
2012–13	15,016
2013–14	15,194
2014–15	15,766

Statistics are determined based on self-identification and represent enrolment as of Sept. 30 of each year.

Percentage of Aboriginal Students Graduating From Elementary and High School

We collect graduation rates based on the successful completion of Grade 12. Our data reflects the provincial average which includes all students in the province no matter where they attend high school.



In 2013–14:

74.7%

of all students graduated 'on-time' (within three years of starting Grade 10).



40.3%

of FMNI students graduated 'on time'.



The number of FMNI students graduating over the past few years up from **32.9%** in 2010–11.

Information from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Education

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The image above was created by Global's Janet Cordahi.

FSIN second vice chief Bobby Cameron says the indigenous population is growing at a fast pace with some experts saying the province could consist of 25 per cent First Nations people by 2035.

"Right now, we're sitting at 144,000 First Nations people," said Cameron.

"We're definitely falling behind when it comes to the funding capacities and when I talk about funding capacities, we talk about First Nations schools where per year, per student we receive about $6,500 whereas in a provincial public school, they receive just under $10,500 for the same student for the same year," said Cameron.

The Saskatchewan Ministry of the Economy is working with companies in the mineral sector to work on the 23rd recommendation. Officials said training providers like Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) have designed and delivered pre-mining programs in collaboration with potash companies.

Cameron says First Nations people must, at some point in time, be fully involved with resource revenue developments so revenue can finance aboriginal education services.

"Once our First Nations become self-reliant and create our own source revenue, through resource development and other sectors, we wouldn't need any funding to address these problems because we would have our own resource revenue funding, we could fund our own programs," said Cameron.

"Some very important decisions have to be made and negotiated for our inherent and treaty rights so that they're protected and our children become part of this economy."

Despite an economic boom, the task force noted Saskatchewan's economic growth has not benefitted everyone equally. The report also said indigenous people are subject to labour market segregation, unequal access to employment, vulnerability to unemployment and income inequality.

The Saskatchewan Ministry of Economy said off-reserve aboriginal people had strong job growth of 15.2 per cent over 2009-14.

According to a 2014 survey, Statistics Canada says 76.9 per cent of First Nations and Métis people in the country who have a university degree are employed and 72.3 per cent who have a post-secondary certificate or diploma have a job.

Post-Secondary Education in Saskatchewan

Aboriginal Students Enroled in Post-Secondary Education in Saskatchewan

2007-08	12,186
2008-09	12,621
2009-10	13,396
2010-11	14,621
2011-12	15,010
2012-13	15,183
2013-14	15,698

University of Saskatchewan and University of Regina Enrolment

Percentage of aboriginal students enroled

	University of Regina	University of Saskatchewan
2010-11	8.3%	8.5%
2011-12	8.9%	7.9%
2012-13	9.9%	7%
2013-14	10.9%	9.1%
2014-15	11.3%	10.1%

Number of Aboriginal Students Graduating

Degrees Awarded to Aboriginal Students

	University of Regina	University of Saskatchewan
2010	171	N/A
2011	130	288
2012	180	319
2013	160	404
2014	167	404

Information from the Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education

© Global News



The image above was created by Global's Janet Cordahi.

There was a 17 per cent increase from 2008-14 in the number of First Nations and Métis graduates in Saskatchewan that have a post-secondary certificate, diploma or degree, according to Statistics Canada.

Since 2007, the Saskatchewan Ministry of Advanced Education says it has increased direct funding to support aboriginal post-secondary education and training by 54 per cent. It says its investments are showing results with over 16,000 First Nations and Métis learners enrolled at the province's post-secondary institutions – a 29 per cent increase since 2007-08.

The JTF report said fulfilling treaty and historical rights and obligations recognized by the Canadian Constitution are the basis for a shared and prosperous future.

"Despite everything that has happened to First Nations and Métis, they remained steadfast in protecting the integrity of who they were as indigenous people and the relationship they believe was forged as part of treaties and is recognized in the Canadian Constitution," said Bouvier.

"Our inherent and treaty rights, it guarantees us education … when we signed treaties in 1800s we never agreed to surrender the land we only agreed to share and that's the message, we're in this province together, we're in this country together, it doesn't matter what race, religion or colour we are, we as parents and grandparents want the best life possible for our children and grandchildren," said Cameron.

The cost of the joint task force was $2 million, which was fully funded by the province.

The report said First Nations and Métis people generally experience a lower quality of life which is often attributed to racism. Racism was defined as a deeper systemic challenge rooted in the history of colonization and it affects individuals and communities today.

To combat racism, the task force heard from participants about the importance of learning a shared history as a starting point.

Bouvier says the JTF's first recommendation – recognition of First Nations and Métis languages – had key importance for paving the way to reconciliation. She added, her emphasis does not suggest that other recommendations are not significant.

"I do not believe that this recommendation has been addressed … indigenizing and decolonizing efforts in early learning programs, schools, post-secondary institutions and workplaces rely on this foundation," said Bouvier.

On Wednesday, the Government of Saskatchewan stated it has long recognized the importance of aboriginal languages and culture and it has adopted a more comprehensive

approach than originally recommended. It added, the province has supported oral language development, family and Elder engagement through the ministry of education as it responds to the JTF.

Where do we go from here?

For the future, Bouvier says it was important for all parties with a stake in improving the economic and social well-being of Saskatchewan citizens to come willingly to common tables to put into action the accumulated wealth of directions that had been provided in this report and others like it.

“We heard that First Nations and Métis have been working hard to create change and to forge a different relationship with governments and institutions for a long time now and they remain committed to using their strengths and gifts to rebuild their communities. That said, there are times they need government and institutions to respond in meaningful ways,” said Bouvier.

“We can’t fix everything overnight but we can chip away at it piece by piece, day after day to create a better future for First Nations people,” said Cameron.

Direct Link: http://globalnews.ca/news/1944091/sask-continues-to-learn-from-aboriginal-task-force-2-years-later/

Lees: Former Edmonton lawyer hits the road to benefit aboriginal youth

By Nick Lees, Edmonton Journal April 19, 2015



Former Edmonton lawyer Don Patterson plans to cycle 7,000 kilometres this summer to raise $150,000 in support of promoting physical activity for aboriginal youth.

EDMONTON - Don Patterson plans this summer to cycle the 7,000 kilometres from Inuvik, N.W.T., to Ontario’s Point Pelee, Canada’s southernmost point.

“I’ll be getting out of bed at 4 a.m. each day, cycling 10 hours and making presentations in the evening,” says the 61-year old Edmonton-born and raised grandfather of four.

“I hope to cover 250 kilometres each day, though the first few days will be slower and challenging.”

That’s because he will cycle 700 kilometres over the lonely gravel road linking Inuvik with the Yukon’s Dawson City. “I’ll change tires in Dawson and then really get going,” he says.

He knows about getting going. In 2012, he rode from Vancouver to St. John’s, N.L., completing the solo ride in 28 days.

Why would the former Edmonton lawyer, now a Mississauga commercial estate real estate agent, punish himself by riding Canada north to south?

He loves cycling, of course, but he also seeks to increase awareness on the importance of physical activity for aboriginal youth.

Patterson wants to raise $150,000 in support of youth leadership and sports activities and develop sustainable community bike programs.

“More than 40 per cent of aboriginal children are overweight,” he says. “But studies show children involved in sport will go on to have lower rates of obesity and diabetes.

“They are also less likely to become involved with drugs and alcohol, two habits which can lead to crime and teenage suicides.”

Academic achievement is a huge challenge, with some 50 per cent not graduating from high school, Patterson says.

“The economic costs alone are in the billions of dollars. And aboriginal youth is the fastest growing segment of our society.”

Patterson is working with Motivate Canada’s GEN7 Aboriginal Role Model Program.

“GEN7 encourages aboriginal youth to live an active, healthy lifestyle through sport and physical activity,” says Patterson.

“The program helps youth build confidence and develop the leadership skills needed to make a difference in their community.”

Patterson believes every child should have the opportunity to participate in sports, irrespective of their physical abilities, financial resources or cultural background.

He will also help the YMCA, which he says plays an important role in building healthy communities by improving the lives of children, teens and young adults.

This was his message when he rode across Canada in 2012. After that ride, he was invited to the Alberta Indigenous Games. He has worked with aboriginal youth ever since.

“I’d always been aware of challenges within the community, but also the richness of aboriginal culture and the importance of traditional teachings,” he says.

“My father was a lawyer who worked within the aboriginal youth justice system here in Edmonton in the 1960s and ‘70s. We also had the opportunity to visit different communities and families. ”

Patterson will begin his ride in Inuvik on June 21, Aboriginal Day, and hopefully finish his journey July 19.

He will pass through Enoch First Nation and Edmonton on July 4 on his way that day to Maskwacis, formerly Hobbema.

Local cycling guru Alex Stieda has been helping him develop bike programs in these communities and plans to gather riders to join Patterson as he heads south.

“There are some great athletes in the aboriginal communities and lots of kids just love being active,” says Patterson. “To help them realize their potential, you can make a donation to the YMCA and Gen7 at spiritride.blog.com. Every cent goes to the cause.”

Knife saved months

Brad Freeman began having short seizures three years ago and tests revealed he had a rare, life-threatening condition requiring brain surgery.

University Hospital neurosurgeon Dr. Max Findlay told Freeman he faced traditional brain surgery or he could travel to Winnipeg for Gamma Knife surgery.

“I could have gone through life without anything happening,” says Freeman. “I certainly didn’t want my skull opened up and parts taken out, an operation that needed months of recovery time. I was afraid I would lose my job.”

He decided to fly to Winnipeg and underwent an operation the next day. The following day he was back home with his wife Cara and new baby boy Rylan.

Freeman, 36, will tell guests at the Brain Centre Campaign’s Pave the Way fundraiser April 23 at the Southgate Audi dealership that the Gamma Knife was “absolutely” the right choice for him.

“We are limited to sending only seven patients each year to Winnipeg,” says the University Hospital Foundation’s Nicole Merrifield. “But we are currently in the planning stages of bringing a Gamma Knife to Edmonton.”

The Brain Centre campaign has already raised $30 million of a $35-million commitment to fund advancements in neuroscience patient facilities and care.

Direct Link:
http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Lees+Former+Edmonton+lawyer+hits+road+benefit+aboriginal+youth/10985742/story.html

UN indigenous peoples forum opens annual meeting in NYC

Youth suicide discussion on the agenda of indigenous reps

NUNATSIAQ NEWS



Aqqaluk Lynge, left, then Inuit Circumpolar Council president, and Áile Javo, president of the Saami council represent Arctic indigenous interests at the 13th session of the United Nations' Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2014. (FILE PHOTO)

Between April 20 and May 1, hundreds of representatives from the 370 million indigenous peoples who live around the world will meet in New York City at the United Nations for the 14th session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples.

This year, among other topics, they plan to discuss self-harm and suicide among the world’s 67 million indigenous youth.

“Economic, social, cultural and political marginalization has displaced many Indigenous youth and in particular, young Indigenous men,” a background document says.

“The marginalization of Indigenous peoples has, in many cases, triggered drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence and a host of other traumatic conditions. These conditions are then ultimately suffered by Indigenous youth and present themselves in many forms, including self-harm and suicide.”

The questions those at the forum will consider include:

• What are the root causes of indigenous youth suicide and self-harm? What other factors contribute to this situation?

• What are examples of best practices in addressing and preventing indigenous youth suicide and self-harm?

• What works and why? What doesn't work?

• How can the UN system help? How can the UN provide support to indigenous youth?

The forum, which meets for 10 days each year at the UN headquarters, is a high-level advisory body that deals with indigenous issues related to economic and social development, culture, environment, education, health and human rights.

Within the forum, Inuit from the Inuit Circumpolar Council and Saami from the Saami Council form the Arctic Caucus.

The UN defines "indigenous peoples" as those who inhabited a country or a geographical region at a time before people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived and became dominant through conquest, occupation, settlement or other means.

But given the diversity of indigenous peoples, the UN has not adopted an official definition of "indigenous." The UN says the best approach is to identify, rather than define indigenous peoples.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674un_permanent_forum_on_indigenous_peoples_opens_annual_meeting_in_nyc/

Saskatoon Public Schools Indigenous Ensemble connects kids with culture

Students form nine schools in first performance of WETU showcasing traditional stories, music, and dance

Reported by **Kelly Malone**
First Posted: Apr 21, 2015 3:31pm

Kieren McIntyre sat in the corner of the stage and talked about the history of the buffalo in front of a full crowd in the theatre at Aden Bowman Collegiate. The stage lights brightened slightly and a student in traditional regalia began to dance the movement of the buffalo.

The performance was part of WETU, the first production by the Saskatoon Public Schools' Indigenous Ensemble.

"I wasn't really exposed to cultural activities and stuff like that growing up," McIntyre said.

"It was really honouring being able to wear the bonnet. I was actually really happy, really surprised with the talent of all the youth in this city. It's pretty hard to go on stage and share with everybody when all eyes are on you... I was really proud with what I saw."

McIntyre, who goes to Royal West Campus, is one of around 30 students from nine different public schools in the city who are members of the ensemble. He explained WETU is the Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota word for Spring.

"I really believe that all youth should be able to get the opportunity to get on stage and learn, as well as immerse themselves and be involved in the teaching and the culture," McIntyre said.

"I think it's something that's really special. I think all youth from all over the city should be able to have that opportunity to learn about their culture like this."

The ensemble was created to bring First Nations and Métis traditions into the school system through music, song, dance, storytelling, traditional arts, and mentorship. The students spent a few months prior to the performance in workshops learning about their cultures and even sewing the regalia they wore on stage.

Cultural Resource Liaison with Saskatoon Public Schools Don Speidel said it was a way for them to allow Aboriginal students to see their own culture reflected in the curriculum.

"It was an exciting response to see the young people and how hungry they are to participate. At first there was some hesitation but as soon as you kind of show them through it and see all the mentors around them to show them and coach them, it was a great thing," he said.

"These young people they just light up... Suddenly they have a sense of awareness and a sense of place."

Speidel said the public school system is making a larger effort to include First Nations and Métis content into the curriculum. The ensemble is a way to directly engage both the participants and the audience members, who are also students.

"We are trying to reclaim ourselves in the natural state of who we were meant to be as opposed to what was imposed on us. Certainly in this day and age, in our school system, having projects like this sets a new direction, a new foundation ," Speidel said.

"We haven't done well for our indigenous students for the past 40 years. So this is an opportunity to uplift these young people and give them a chance to see themselves and set them free in terms of pride and how to actively get involved in the public school system."

Grade 11 student at Mount Royal Shaylene Merasty Buffalo said showcasing her culture to other students was "pretty awesome".

"I like to dance in front of the audience. It's nice to wear regalia and share my culture with people who don't know much about it," she said.

Fellow Mount Royal student Brayden Serveright said he has danced since he could walk. The ensemble is a way to share that important part of his identity with his non-indigenous classmates.

"I think this experience is pretty cool spreading culture with the youth. It was a really good experience. I hope this continues on over the years so more of our Aboriginal youth can get involved with culture," he said.

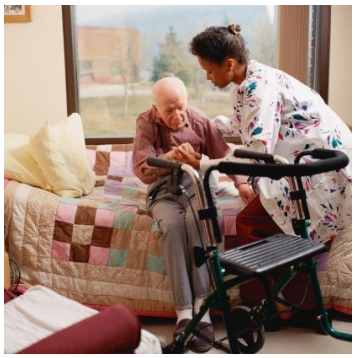
Direct Link: http://ckom.com/story/saskatoon-public-schools-indigenous-ensemble-connects-kids-culture/549773

Budget tops up compassionate care plan, spends more on First Nations education

by Murray Brewster, The Canadian Press

Posted Apr 21, 2015 4:12 pm EDT

Last Updated Apr 22, 2015 at 7:20 am EDT



A senior gets help from a care worker.

OTTAWA – Those who have to take time away from work to care for a dying loved one will get more help from the federal government.

Finance Minister Joe Oliver's new budget sets aside $37 million more each year for compassionate care benefits under employment insurance.

That will allow people to take up to six months off work, instead of the current six weeks.

The change will come into effect next Jan. 1.

"For more and more Canadians, caring for family not only means making sure the kids get the best start possible in life," Oliver said in his budget speech to the Commons. "It means being there for parents and other elderly relatives through their final days.

"When someone you love is gravely ill, you should feel free to focus on what matters most."

It's one of a series of social initiatives outlined in the fiscal plan, and comes ahead of a federal election scheduled for October — and four years after a parliamentary committee studied the issue and recommended substantial change.

An additional $200 million over five years will be earmarked to improve the First Nations education system.

Unlike a lot of the initiatives in Oliver's budget, that money will be available this year.

The funds will go into two programs under the umbrella of the "Strong Schools, Successful Students" initiative.

The funding is in addition to the $1.4 billion the government set aside a year ago for First Nations education. That money is sitting dormant on the government's books for now because attempts to reform the aboriginal school system through legislation collapsed.

The budget also sets aside $116 million over four years to eliminate the clawback facing students who work part-time to make ends meet.

Starting next year, the Canada Student Loan Program will no longer cut support to working students for every dollar they earn over $100 a week.

The federal government also says it's planning to expand eligibility for Canada student grants after 2016 and to reduce the amount of money parents are expected to contribute to their child's post-secondary education.

The budget set aside $150 million more over four years for social housing.

Oliver also announced the mandate of the Mental Health Commission of Canada will be renewed in 2017. The non-profit agency, created in 2007, has developed a national mental health strategy and produced initiatives to reduce stigma attached to mental disorders.

Direct Link: http://www.680news.com/2015/04/21/budget-tops-up-compassionate-care-plan-spends-more-on-first-nations-education/

Sachigo Lake First Nation youth finish 13-day fundraising walk

'Journey of New Beginnings' aims to raise money for residence for First Nations students

By Jody Porter, CBC News Posted: Apr 21, 2015 6:00 AM ET Last Updated: Apr 21, 2015 6:00 AM ET



Support worker Robert Barkman was with Daniel Levac when he was killed last fall in Thunder Bay. Barkman says taking part in the 13-day walk with others who knew Daniel was a "healing journey." (Jody Porter/CBC)

A group of First Nations young people desperately want a safe place for students to live in Thunder Bay, Ont. so they walked more than 1,000 kilometres to raise money for it.

It's the second time young people from Sachigo Lake First Nation have completed a fundraising walk across the ice road from their community to the city, but this time it took on an additional meaning.

Daniel Levac, 20, of Sachigo Lake was fatally stabbed in front of the movie theatre in Thunder Bay in October 2014. He was living in the city while attending Dennis Franklin Cromarty high school.

"I was with him when he died. I was holding him when he died. I witnessed the whole thing the night it happened," said support worker Robert Barkman, who chaperoned the young people on both walks.

"Two weeks prior to his death I bumped into Daniel at the mall and he told me he wanted to do this walk," Barkman said. "He told me it was his graduation year this year and I had promised him [he could] because he wanted to do this walk for the young people, the future generation."



Karianne Goodman joined the walkers when they came through her community of Sandy Lake. Goodman says Dennis Franklin Cromarty School was like "a second home" to her and she wanted to help other students feel safe coming out to school. (Jody Porter/CBC)

The group of walkers helped fulfil that promise, thinking of Daniel and talking about him every day of their 13-day walk, Barkman said.

"I looked at it as a healing journey," he said. "It gave me a motive to keep going. I believe his spirit was with us the whole time."

The group of nine walkers included Daniel's sister and several of his friends, as well as his mother during the final leg of the journey. Myra Levac cried as her son was rememberd, during a welcoming event for the group in Thunder Bay on Monday.



Nishnawbe Aski Nation deputy grand chief Alvin Fiddler says leaders are doing everything they can to keep First Nations students safe in Thunder Bay. (Jody Porter/CBC)

"We always think about you, about the loss of your son," Nishnawbe Aski Nation Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler said to her. "That's why we're here today to make sure we do everything we can to ensure the safety of all our students that are here in Thunder Bay."

Most remote First Nations don't have traditional high schools and teenagers must leave their families for their secondary education in the city. Levac is the eighth First Nations student to die in Thunder Bay since 2000.

Plans for a student living centre were unveiled in 2012 but funding for the $15-million combined residence and recreation centre has been slow in coming.

The original Journey of New Beginnings walk from Sachigo Lake in 2013 earned $75,000 in donations.

Assembly of First Nations Ontario Regional Chief Stan Beardy said he was inspired by the young people and called on government to be equally committed to their safety.

"They're taking responsibility for themselves and other young people," Beardy said. "They're prepared to do their part to make sure others are safe when they come out for school."

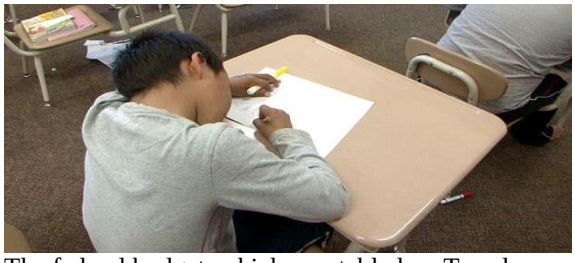
Donations from this year's walk haven't been tallied yet. The organizers said pledges are still coming in.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/sachigo-lake-first-nation-youth-finish-13-day-fundraising-walk-1.3041131

Federal budget 2015 falls short in aboriginal education funding, says advocate

'It's going to lead to more crisis situations in First Nations communities,' says Rebecca Chartrand

CBC News Posted: Apr 22, 2015 4:00 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 22, 2015 7:55 AM CT



The federal budget, which was tabled on Tuesday, earmarks $200 million over five years for aboriginal education. (CBC)

An indigenous education advocate in Winnipeg says the federal government's 2015 budget is not providing enough funding to help aboriginal students.

The Conservative government's budget, which was tabled on Tuesday, earmarks $200 million over five years starting in 2015-16 "to help support First Nations to achieve better education outcomes, including building partnerships with provincial school systems."

But that amount falls short of the $1.9 billion that Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced in February 2014, says Rebecca Chartrand, an aboriginal education consultant with the Seven Oaks School Division.

The federal government is not providing enough money to help aboriginal students succeed, said Chartrand, who is seeking the Liberal nomination for the Churchill-Keewatinook Aski riding in the upcoming federal election.

"There's a need for infrastructure to build more schools, to bring more resources and support to students in schools," she told CBC News late Tuesday.

"There's a need right across the board to support learning for First Nations children."

She added that aboriginal schools pay the same amount as public schools for resources, staff and materials, so aboriginal education deserves the same level of funding.

"Where's the money going to come from?" Chartrand said. "It's going to lead to more crisis situations in First Nations communities."

Harper had pledged the $1.9 billion to support his government's First Nations control of the First Nations education act. A number of aboriginal leaders do not support the proposed legislation, which will not proceed.

The funding proposed in this year's budget will "support the First Nation Student Success Program and the Education Partnerships Program," according to budget documents.

The budget also proposes investing $12 million over three years in the Indspire program, which provides post-secondary scholarships and bursaries for First Nations and Inuit students.

The government announced in November that it will spend $500 million on building and renovating schools on reserves.

National Chief Perry Bellegarde of the Assembly of First Nations described the budget as "a status-quo budget, and the status quo is not acceptable.

"We don't see any investments in housing to deal with the 130,000 units we need. We don't see investments in education on reserves. There's still a huge fiscal imbalance there," be said.

"We don't see any investments even in access to potable water. There are still 93 communities with boil-water advisories."

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/federal-budget-2015-falls-short-in-aboriginal-education-funding-says-advocate-1.3043246

Manitoba chiefs ask UN to study aboriginal access to education

By Staff The Canadian Press, April 22, 2015 2:52 pm



Grand Chief Derek Nepinak of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs pauses as he speaks during a press conference following a meeting with the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs has asked the UN's special rapporteur on the right to education to study aboriginal access to education in Canada.

WINNIPEG – Manitoba chiefs want the United Nations to investigate aboriginal access to education.

Grand Chief Derek Nepinak, of the Assembly of Manitoba chiefs, said he has sent a formal invitation to the UN's special rapporteur on the right to education.

Canadians receive some of the best education in the world, but that's not the case for aboriginal children, he said. First Nation communities are chronically underfunded when it comes to education, he added.

The Canadian government is almost certainly breaching international standards and obligations to provide equal access to education for aboriginal children, he said.

The UN's special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples visited Canada in 2013 and called for an improvement in the living conditions of First Nations.

Direct Link: http://globalnews.ca/news/1954775/manitoba-chiefs-ask-un-to-study-aboriginal-access-to-education/

Aboriginal Health

Feds pledge money for on-reserve First Nations members with prescription drug addictions

Ian Graham / Thompson Citizen
April 17, 2015 12:00 AM

Manitoba First Nations members who live on-reserve will have more access to treatment and support in their battles against prescription drug addiction as a result of funding announced by the federal government April 14.

Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages Shelly Glover made the announcement of $2.96 million in funding over five years on behalf of Health Minister Rona Ambrose in Winnipeg.

“Our government is committed to addressing the issue of prescription drug abuse. Today’s announcement will help First Nations living in Manitoba who are facing prescription drug abuse issues in their communities,” said Glover in a news release. “This funding will ensure there is access to culturally relevant care and support.”

The money will go towards existing treatment centres so they can design more effective interventions and support people with prescription drug addictions, as well as to prevention training activities for staff who treat people with drug addictions and a prescription drug abuse crisis intervention team made up of specialists that can help caregivers in treatment facilities manage clients. The team will be co-ordinated through regional hubs in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Manitoba’s hub will be under the supervision of the Opaskwayak Cree Nation Health Authority in partnership with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan.

“One of the most important parts of any movement, national or not, is about good partnerships and we recognize how important those partnerships are when addressing our final goal of reducing the prescription drug abuse in First Nations communities and across Canada,” said Val Charlette, mental health co-ordinator of the Beatrice Wilson Health Centre and co-ordinator of the crisis intervention unit.

The money is part of $13.5 million in funding for prescription drug abuse treatment in First Nations communities across Canada.

The federal government committed $44 million over five years to expand its national anti-drug strategy to include prescription drug abuse. The government says it will spend more than $236 million a year to support mental health and addictions programming in First Nations and Inuit communities, including support from Health Canada for 44

community-based addiction treatment centres, and for drug and alcohol abuse prevention services.

- See more at: http://www.thompsoncitizen.net/news/nickel-belt/feds-pledge-money-for-on-reserve-first-nations-members-with-prescription-drug-addictions-1.1826465#sthash.wW0xMLrC.dpuf

Inuit family clinic Ottawa's 'best-kept secret'

Elizabeth Payne, Ottawa Citizen
Published on: April 17, 2015
Last Updated: April 17, 2015 12:39 PM EDT



Members of the Akausivik Inuit Family Health Team, left to right: Mary Hutton, RN, Connie Sideule, executive director, Aigah Attagutsiak, case manager/ interpreter, Emily Aqpik, medical secretary, Santos Lopez, medical secretary, Jason Creaghan, physician, Indu Gambhir, physician.

When the H1N1 flu pandemic arrived in Canada in 2009, health officials took a close look at Ottawa's growing Inuit community. Among Inuit in the North, the rate of mortality and complications from the flu was 12 times higher than the national average.

A special clinic, set up to make sure Inuit in Ottawa didn't face the same odds, had remarkable success. "We had zero mortality and zero complications," says Dr. Indu Gambhir.

That clinic lit a spark which, six years later, has become the Akausivik Inuit Family Health Team.

The team, dedicated to treating members of Ottawa's Inuit community, is the only one of its kind in the world. It opened three years ago in an airy space in Vanier decorated with Inuit art and crafts.

Its patients are members of a community with more health challenges than the general population and even a different attitude toward their own health in many cases. Notably, Inuit life expectancy is between 10 and 17 years less than the general population in Canada.

It is too soon to say what effect the clinic will have on those numbers for Inuit living in Ottawa. But officials say they are seeing a major improvement in the health of people who have started coming to the clinic, even those with complex problems such as addictions.

“The potential for what we can do is great, but the need is also great,” said clinic executive director Connie Sideule.

Sideule and physicians Ghambir and Dr. Ann Duggan say their patients have a different approach to health care than is typical in Ottawa.

“In general, our population don’t come in for things that are trivial,” said Duggan. “They come in for things that are significant. We don’t spend a lot of time dealing with things that would be better dealt with at home with Tylenol.”

There is also a different expectation of health than in the non-Inuit population. One elderly patient hadn’t seen a doctor in 20 years before coming to the clinic. Others are hesitant visit a doctor, even when they are sick.

“That is something we are working on, that expectation of what it is to be healthy and that they deserve to be healthy.”

Patients tend to have other issues that can complicate their treatment and their health. The clinic’s whole patient approach takes an overall look at the patient’s health and challenges, as well as family members. Visits are not rushed. With the help of patient navigators who work in Inuktitut and English, the team assesses the overall health of patients and factors – including living conditions – that might contribute to their health.

A team from the clinic regularly visits homeless shelters and offers health care to Inuit residents living on the street. Back at the clinic, staff assist patients with everything from visiting a pharmacy to getting tests done.

“We are helping people transition,” said Duggan. “Many people come from the North and have never used a pharmacy, never used the bus.”

The family health team approach emphasizes preventative medicine. For many patients, who have never had a family doctor before, this is a first.

The work is rewarding for both patients and staff.

“I can honestly say I have a personal relationship with the doctors, nurses and staff and it has made a huge difference in my health,” wrote one patient.

“It is very gratifying as a professional when you treat people as a whole person and not a disease,” said Gambhir. “I think this clinic is the best-kept secret in Ottawa.”

By the Numbers

725: The number of Inuit living in Ottawa, according to the 2006 census. Inuit organizations say a more accurate number would have been 1,800
3,300: Ottawa’s Inuit population in 2015
1: Ottawa’s rank among Canadian cities with the biggest Inuit population outside of the Arctic
65 per cent: Growth in Ontario’s Inuit population between 2006 and 2011, according to the National Household Survey
15,000: Estimated Inuit population in Ontario in less than a decade, based on the current growth rate
56 per cent: Percentage of Inuit in Ontario who were under 25 years old, according 2006 census numbers
59 per cent: Percentage of Ontario Inuit who complete high school, compared to more than 80 per cent of the general population
7 per cent: Percentage of Ontario Inuit who have a university degree
15 per cent: Percentage of Inuit in Ontario who are unemployed — about double the rate for the general population

Direct Link: http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/inuit-family-clinic-ottawas-best-kept-secret

Aboriginal girl's chemo case returns to court Friday

Hearing asks justice to clarify ruling allowing treatment with indigenous medicine



Justice Gethin Edward made a controversial ruling that gave an aboriginal mother the right to refuse chemotherapy and treat her daughter's acute lymphoblastic leukemia with indigenous medicine instead.

Hamilton Spectator
By Joanna Frketich

Two cases of aboriginal girls quitting chemotherapy in favour of traditional healing are being further examined.

McMaster Children's Hospital is going to court Friday as the province seeks clarification of a ruling that gave an aboriginal mother the right to refuse chemotherapy and treat her daughter's acute lymphoblastic leukemia with indigenous medicine.

In Makayla Sault's case, the girl's death will be examined by a committee reporting to the Chief Coroner of Ontario. The Pediatric Death Review Committee is a "group of experts who review challenging cases for death-prevention recommendations," says coroner Dr. Jack Stanborough.

Stanborough's office originally investigated the Jan. 19 death of the 11-year-old New Credit girl.

The unusual hearing Friday asking Justice Gethin Edward to clarify his Nov. 14 order was brought by Ontario's Attorney General.

"Occasionally, there may be some uncertainty as to what was meant or intended by the language chosen by the judge in making his decision," said Cynthia Kuehl, a partner at Lerners LLP who is not involved in this case but has worked on various high-profile appeals related to health law. "The uncertainty may, for example, relate to whether he intended the decision to apply to certain situations or people (e.g. the scope of the order)."

The province was not part of the original case in provincial court family division in Brantford and the motion will also ask for the attorney general to be added as a party, says spokesperson Christine Burke.

"It was unusual that the AG did not appear on the original application given that constitutional issues (were involved) and it looks like this is being rectified at this time," said Kuehl.

A joint submission will be made by the Attorney General and all involved in the original case including Hamilton Health Sciences, Brant Family and Children's Services, the Office of the Children's Lawyer and Six Nations.

"There will be submissions and the judge will likely render a decision on the motion immediately after," said hospital lawyer Daphne Jarvis.

Jarvis as well as hospital chief executive Rob MacIsaac would not comment further. Children's Aid Society lawyer Mark Handelman and the Attorney General's office also wouldn't discuss the submission. Six Nations chief Ava Hill did not respond.

"His honour authorized us to advise media that this was happening, to avoid secrecy," said Handelman. "He also told us not to say anything further."

The appeal deadline has been extended several times and is currently May 1. Both the hospital and the Children's Aid Society don't plan to appeal, but the province hasn't ruled it out.

At issue is whether constitutional protections of aboriginal culture outweigh the statutory obligation to protect children. Edward allowed the mother to abandon chemotherapy that had an 80 to 95 per cent chance of curing her daughter's cancer because he determined traditional healing is an integral part of the family's culture.

There are also questions about the ability of children to make their own medical decisions. Ontario is the only province with no age of consent.

Makayla was the first of the two girls to quit chemotherapy in May and the second girl, who can't be named because of a publication ban, followed suit in August. Both underwent traditional healing as well as going to an alternative health centre in the U.S.

The hospital asked Brant Family and Children's Services to intervene in both cases and force chemotherapy. For the first time in Canada, a hospital took the Children's Aid Society to court when it refused to intervene in the second case.

Makayla died of a stroke that her parents believe was caused by the limited chemotherapy she received after being diagnosed nearly a year earlier. A number of doctors speculated it was the result of her cancer relapsing.

The committee will not assign blame in her death but will instead make recommendations to prevent similar deaths from happening again. In 2013, it examined 12 cases where issues about medical diagnosis or provision of care were identified.

That same year, it looked at 96 cases of children who had been involved with Children's Aid Society within 12 months of their death.

Direct Link: http://www.thespec.com/news-story/5570310-case-of-aboriginal-girl-taken-off-chemo-back-in-court-friday/

First Nations senior not covered by ambulance service cap

By Kerry Benjoe, Leader-Post April 23, 2015



The province's seniors' cap for ambulance service does not apply to any First Nations senior living on a First Nation

The family of a First Nations woman are worried not only about the senior's health, but her pocketbook.

Louisa Moberly, from Montreal Lake Cree Nation, is recovering from a series of falls she sustained while in acute care in La Ronge Hospital. The falls left her with a broken hip and bruising to her body and face. She was transported to the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon for treatment, but must be transported to Prince Albert to continue her recovery in a facility closer to her home community.

That single ride may leave Moberly with a hefty ambulance bill. The province's seniors' cap for ambulance service does not apply to her and to any First Nations senior living on a First Nation. Leader of the Opposition Cam Broten said the province needs to re-evaluate its ambulance service policy.

"First Nations seniors are falling through the cracks and not getting coverage for these interfacility transfers to their home area," he said.

"This isn't right."

Broten would like the province to do something to fix that gap for all First Nations seniors living on reserve.

"Saskatchewan First Nations seniors should be able to get the same coverage as any other senior in the province could receive," he said. "It's a huge barrier to proper care for many people and it's not fair, it's not right and we should be able to better in Saskatchewan."

He said the government has known about the gap in service for several years and it's time it did something to fix it.

Health Minister Dustin Duncan said the province is looking into Moberly's case.

He said the federal government, through the First Nations Inuit Health, does cover the cost of inter-facility transfers for First Nations seniors living on reserve.

Duncan said the federal government has changed its program. Ambulance transportation is covered when a patient is transferred from a lower-level facility to a higher-level facility. This means

the transportation to Saskatoon will be covered under, but not the transportation from Saskatoon to Prince Albert.

"We are following up with the family," Duncan said. "At this point, we are not sure how it is going to resolve itself, but our commitment is that we are going to work with her and her family to see whether we can help out in some way."

Broten said that is good news for Moberly, but that doesn't help other First Nations seniors.

Duncan said the government is not prepared to make any commitment to change its policy.

"The more we backfill our programs in what is typically federal jurisdiction then obviously, that allows for the federal government, perhaps, in the future to remove more programs," he said. "We are always mindful of how much we want to backfill into those programs. ... At this point, I don't know what the implications of that may be."

Duncan said Moberly's situation is very complicated.

Direct Link:
http://www.leaderpost.com/health/First+Nations+senior+covered+ambulance+service/10996211/story.html

Aboriginal History

Northern Quebec Cree community celebrates 25th anniversary of Odeyak voyage

Group travelled more than 2,000 km over 5 weeks to protest proposed damming of the Great Whale River

By Jaime Little, Betsy Longchap, CBC News Posted: Apr 22, 2015 3:57 PM ET Last Updated: Apr 22, 2015 4:09 PM ET



In 1990 Cree and Inuit from Northern Quebec travelled more than 2000 km over five weeks, by dogsled on the frozen bay, by road and by river, all the way to downtown Manhattan in a campaign against the proposed damming of the Great Whale River. (Cree Cultural Institute)

It was 25 years ago today that 60 Inuit and Cree from Northern Quebec paddled their Odeyak into New York City, a blue and green Earth Day flag fluttering at the bow.

The Odeyak is a canoe-kayak hybrid built in 1990 in Whapmagoostui/Kuujjuarapik, a Cree/Inuit community on the Hudson Bay coast.

It was created to symbolize the two nations' fight against the flooding of their territory for a hydroelectric megaproject.

"We are the people you never hear about until you want something from us," said Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come at a stop in Ottawa during the Odeyak's voyage 25 years ago.

"We are the victims of environmental racism."

Today, Cree leaders and youth are gathering at the Aanischaaukamikw Cree Cultural Institute in Oujé-Bougoumou, a nine-hour drive north of Montreal, to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Odeyak voyage and its impact on Cree relations with government and development.



Sarah Pashagumskum, from the Cree Nation of Chisasibi, was just a teenage when the Odeyak was launched. (Jaime Little/CBC)

Sarah Pashagumskum, from the Cree Nation of Chisasibi, was just a teenager when the Odeyak was launched.

"I remember being amazed that there was so much media coverage," Pashagumskum said.

"I remember being proud that there were people from our communities out there in the world, taking on this great responsibility and this really big mission, and just bringing our voice out to the world."

The Odeyak travelled more than 2,000 km over five weeks, by dogsled on the frozen bay, by road and by river, all the way to downtown Manhattan in a campaign against the proposed damming of the Great Whale River.

The $12.6-billion Great Whale project wound have diverted eight large rivers and affected an ecosystem the size of France. Hydro-Québec planned to sell electricity from that project to New England and New York State.

'I remember being proud that there were people from our communities out there in the world, taking on this great responsibility and this really big mission.-
Sarah Pashagumskum, from the Cree Nation of Chisasibi

Indigenous activists figured the way to stop that was to get American citizens on their side.

"It was hard to imagine what the result would be because this was something we'd never done," says Matthew Mukash, one of the Cree strategists and paddlers on that voyage.

It was a public relations move that paid off. The Odeyak, and the message it brought, got the attention of media and environmentalists around the world.

"The news spread like wildfire," says Mukash, who would later serve as Grand Chief.

"The result was the Quebec government had nowhere to go because they knew they were being watched."

New York State pulled out of its $17-billion agreement to buy the electricity, and Quebec eventually shelved the Great Whale project.



The Odeyak is a canoe-kayak hybrid built in 1990 in Whapmagoostui/Kuujjuarapik, a Cree/Inuit community on the Hudson Bay coast. It was created to symbolize the two nations' fight against the flooding of their territory for a hydroelectric megaproject. (Jaime Little/CBC)

Mukash says the leverage the Crees gained in 1990 helped them to negotiate the Paix des Braves, a 2002 agreement with Quebec that involved greater revenue sharing from development projects on Cree territory — including Hydro-Québec's damming of the Rupert River ten years later.

"The Cree Nation is seen as one of the most powerful indigenous nations in the world because of what we were able to achieve in 1990," says Mukash.

The Odeyak is on permanent display at the Institute. And Pashagumskum, who witnessed it's maiden voyage as a teen, is now director of programs at the ACCI.

"It's one of the first artifacts that we brought to ACCI so it's hugely important to us," says Pash,

"Having it here gives us the responsibility of ensuring that people are able to learn about the event and the experience. This event today is a way for us to bridge from the past to the present to the future."

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/northern-quebec-cree-community-celebrates-25th-anniversary-of-odeyak-voyage-1.3044078

Aboriginal Identity & Representation

Montreal linguist encouraging students to study Inuktitut

University prof invites Inuktitut speaker to class

DAVID MURPHY, April 17, 2015 - 1:05 pm



Linguistics professor Richard Compton, at l'Université du Quebec à Montréal, is trying to get his students interested in under-studied languages such as Inuktitut. (PHOTO BY DAVID MURPHY)

Special to Nunatsiaq News

MONTREAL — For a guy who studies languages, Richard Compton uses his hands a lot when he talks.

And today, he's talking, and gesturing, about Inuktitut, and how "under described" it is as a language.

"There are thousands and thousands of books on the structure of English, English semantics," Compton explains.

“There’s a lot less on this entire language family than just American English. Or even New York English,” said Compton with a chuckle and a wave of his hands in his fourth floor office at the Université du Québec à Montréal.

He ought to know. Compton’s written dozens of complicated-sounding research papers about the Inuit language.

Here are a few examples: “Explaining the lack of intersective strictly-attributive adjectives in Inuit,” and, “Polysynthetic word-internal adjectives and verb-like adjectives in Inuit.”

You’d probably have to be a linguist — someone who studies languages and their structure — to understand the subtleties of that research.

So the UQAM linguistics professor breaks down his specialty in Inuktitut a little more simply — he’s interested in figuring out word distinction.

“It’s my job to ask: is that more like a little -y suffix to put on nouns to make them diminutive or is it more like a real adjective?”

There aren’t many linguists outside of Inuit Nunangat regions who specialize in Inuit languages as Compton does.

“Not hundreds,” he said, adding he couldn’t guess an actual number.

But he does hope to inspire students to focus on Inuktitut, or other similarly under-studied languages.

And he could well inspire some — he’s currently teaching a class where undergraduate students have to dissect the Inuktitut language as spoken by a native speaker.

The course is called “analyse avec informateur,” which is commonly called “field methods” in English. The point of the course isn’t to learn to speak Inuktitut, but to study the language in a scientific way.

Compton explains that in his class, students learn how to gather data from a language, write short descriptive statements about the sound system, word structure, sentence structure and more.

Or, in other words, using “knowledge to describe a language that you don’t know anything about.”

In class, an Inuktitut speaker tells a story to the students, or the students will ask the speaker questions — like how to say a word — and the speaker will respond in Inuktitut.

The students look for intonation, stress and pitch in the language. When using a computer audio application, they can even monitor the different sound waves to describe the language.

“This sort of prepares you for this situation that you can encounter in the field as a linguist,” Compton said.

This is the data gathering part of the course, he explained. In the second part of the course, students meet one-on-one with the Inuktitut speaker once a week to gather data on a certain aspect of the language.

Aside from the technical side of the class, Compton says it’s important students are exposed to different indigenous languages.

“I think universities in Canada have a special responsibility, given that these languages are spoken in Canada, to expose students to work on these languages. To get students interested in these languages.

“It’s also just good societally, for people to know more about the linguistic situation of the communities in the North and about the Inuit and Inuktitut,” Compton said.

“I think it’s just, on one hand, them being well-rounded and knowledgeable citizens about the country, the continent, the world they live in.”

That rings true for at least one of Compton’s students, 26-year-old Gabriel Martin.

“I was struck by this obvious statement: the term ‘Aboriginal peoples’ includes many distinct identities as much as ‘Qallunaat’ does,” said Martin, whose primary language is French.

“It then [became] obvious that, like most Quebecers, I hardly know anything about my northern neighbors. It was the opportunity for me to dispel some myths.”

Compton, who is currently helping to edit a new version of a dictionary of the Kangiryuarmiut dialect of Inuinnaqtun, has travelled to Iqaluit, Baker Lake and Ulukhaktok in the Northwest Territories to carry out his research.

Although he says he’s no sociolinguist — the study of the relationship between language and society — he knows the importance of researching and documenting ancient words and languages to revitalize and preserve them.

But research alone won’t save a language. Television, other media, video games and parents pressuring kids to speak English or French to get good jobs also play a big role in language viability, Compton said.

A language survives, he said, when members of the community speak it as often as possible.

“I did notice in Baker Lake it seemed like a lot of the younger kids were speaking in English, playing in English. And that’s not ideal,” Compton said.

“But I understand, also, the challenge for the territory in promoting fluency and bilingualism; that often the fluent speakers aren’t necessarily in a position to be able to teach at a high school level,” he said.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674montreal_linguist_encouraging_students_to_study_inuktitut/

Aboriginal Inequality & Poverty

Aboriginal coalition to end homelessness created

posted Apr 17, 2015 at 9:00 AM

The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness Coalition celebrated the creation of an Aboriginal Coalition to End Homelessness.

First Nations’ chiefs and band representatives from across the Island gathered at the Esquimalt Big House to demonstrate collective support for the new coalition. In attendance at the event were representatives from the Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka’wakw peoples.

A drum was signed as a symbolic gesture of support and willingness to engage in a dialogue about solutions and common goals.

“I cannot emphasize enough the need for us as aboriginal people to form a coalition to tackle the issues of our homeless,” said James Wilson, chairman of the Kwakiutl District Council.

“We need to reach out and re-connect with our family members that are separated from us for whatever the reason. We must create opportunities for our People to rekindle their spirit in their own traditional teachings, cultural values and beliefs. An Aboriginal Coalition can work to create those opportunities and more, through collaborative approaches and ideas.”

A disproportionate number of the individuals facing homelessness in Greater Victoria come from an aboriginal background.

“We need to engage the collective wisdom of the Aboriginal communities from the entire island in order to address the unique challenges that are causing aboriginal homelessness,” said Andrew Wynn-Williams, executive director of the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness.

Direct Link: http://www.vicnews.com/news/300295801.html

Funding helps youth find permanent homes

Spencer Anderson / Daily News
April 18, 2015 12:00 AM

The province has announced an additional $2 million to help find permanent homes for children and youth currently in the province's care.

The announcement came after a report from the B.C. Representative for Children and Youth Friday that says the Ministry of Children and Family Development fell short of its target of finding permanent homes for 300 children in ministry care.

Children and youth representative Mary Ellen Turpel-Lafonde also said the province needs to do more to connect First Nations children with First Nations adoptive parents.

There was some good news in the update on adoption figures, the second to come out since Turpel-Lafonde's office released its report, Finding Forever Families: A Review of the Provincial Adoption System, in 2014. According to figures released Friday, a total of 265 children and youth in government care were placed for adoption, bringing the overall number of children and youth waiting for adoption down to 941 in the 2014-15 cycle, 33 fewer than in the previous year.

The number of adoptions also increased 17 per cent from the previous year, the figures show. The number of aboriginal youth and children that were adopted also increased to 99 from 75. However, the number of adoptions fell short of the government's target of 300. And Turpel-Lafond said during a forum on First Nations children in Nanaimo on Friday that the province was not doing enough to reach out to First nations communities to find homes for children who need them.

Although the government failed to meet its adoption targets, "... inside those results, what we're seeing is that there's (proportionately) a decline in the number of aboriginal children being placed in aboriginal families," Turpel-Lafond said.

"Which means the majority of aboriginal children, who in fact comprise the majority of children in care in B.C., they are drifting through foster care and not finding. .. permanent attachment to their families of origin and their culture."

Stephanie Cadieux, minister of children and family development, was also present at the forum and acknowledged the province "can do better," although she said progress had been made. The $2 million in funding will go will support a number of organizations in the province, including the Indigenous Perspective Society, which will use $300,000 in funding to support the search for permanent homes for aboriginal children and youth. The Adoptive Families Association of BC will also get $950,000.

"Certainly we want to see more aboriginal families coming forward to adopt children or aboriginal family members coming forward with other permanent arrangements for kids from their own family, extended family," Cadieux said.

"... That is the ideal situation, but there are lots of families as well who are non-aboriginal who can parent very well and aboriginal child," she added.

"The big piece there is ensuring that the cultural connection to the community is established and maintained, so there are extra considerations when a child in adopted in a non-aboriginal family."

- See more at: http://www.nanaimodailynews.com/news/nanaimo-region/funding-helps-youth-find-permanent-homes-1.1827946#sthash.FLrhUGJr.dpuf

Aboriginal Politics

Solutions imposed by Ottawa on First Nations are doomed to failure

Gord Peters, Guest Columnist

First posted: Saturday, April 18, 2015 08:00 PM EDT



Parliament Hill. Tony Caldwell/QMI AGENCY

In a recent column, ("First Nations need real reform", April 15) Lorne Gunter argued that Ottawa has continued to fail First Nations in their continued efforts to "break the cycle of bad governance" in our communities.

This article has a valid point in that the Band Council system in many cases is not working, but entirely misses the fact that this is not a failure of First Nations leadership, but instead a failure of a system that was forcefully imposed on our original governments.

This is where I believe Mr. Gunter has missed the boat on the crux of this issue, entirely.

The fact that Mr. Gunter continues to see a top-down approach to solving governance problems in First Nations as the solution is exactly the source of the problem.

It is not simply that the Government hasn't succeeded in the right model yet, it's that they have no place dictating how our Nations establish our governance structures — period.

Imposed system

The elected Band Council system is one that was imposed on our Nations by the Indian Act, replacing our traditional governance systems with one intended to oppress us, and set us up for failure.

Make no mistake, the Band Council system is a tool of colonization.

The solution here is not for the Canadian Government to continue to impose new paternalistic and imperialistic governance structures on our Nations, but to instead support our Nations to undo the damage created by the Indian Act.

The first step in this is for our Nations to regain access to the land.

Having expanded land bases is necessary for our Nations to be self-sufficient and financially stable.

Mr. Gunter is indeed correct when he says throwing money at reserves will not solve the problem of dependency, but what he fails to recognize is that Canada does this as a way of brushing under the rug the fact that it is squatting and generating revenue on unceded land.

Our nations need to regain access to the land to sustain our peoples.

Reviving governance

In addition, many of our Nations are undergoing work to revive and restore our traditional governance structures.

I look no farther than the Oneida Nation of the Thames outside of London, Ontario to see this work happening in its early stages.

The traditional and elected councils are defining their relationship with each other, and working together to take the first steps towards reviving their original ways of governance.

This is exciting, brave, and challenging work.

This work will take time, and it will look differently in every community, but it is being driven and led by our citizens — and that is the right approach.

Canada needs to stop acting as an adversary to this work.

Canada can assist us in moving forward, away from the oppressive policies within the Indian Act, but must stop trying to solve our problems for us in ways that have historically failed again and again.

— Grand Chief Peters represents the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians.

Direct Link: http://www.torontosun.com/2015/04/18/solutions-imposed-by-ottawa-on-first-nations-are-doomed-to-failure

AFN Chief Bellegarde says 'status quo budget' offers little for First Nations

GLORIA GALLOWAY

OTTAWA — The Globe and Mail

Published Wednesday, Apr. 22 2015, 9:00 PM EDT

Last updated Wednesday, Apr. 22 2015, 9:03 PM EDT

The leader of Canada's largest native group says his people must start voting in large numbers to force Ottawa to address the social and economic problems that plague their communities after this week's federal budget offered little for First Nations.

"It's a status-quo budget. And I always say the status quo is not acceptable," Perry Bellegarde, the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, said Wednesday in an interview with The Globe and Mail. But with a federal election in the fall, Mr. Bellegarde said native people have an opportunity make their voices heard.

"If we get the First Nations vote out, we can influence 50 to 60 ridings. We've got to start mobilizing our political power as First Nations people."

Although aboriginal people face a myriad of issues including lack of access to clean water, inadequate housing and poverty, the gap is especially noticeable in education. Reserve schools have been underfunded for decades, with funding increases capped at 2 per cent, and the graduation rates are less than half of what they are in the rest of Canada.

Last year, the Conservative government was talking about removing the cap and committing $1.25-billion over three years, starting in 2016-17, for core funding for reserve schools. That fell off the table when chiefs across the country rejected the government's proposed First Nations Education Act, which they said put too much control in the hands of the Aboriginal Affairs Minister.

The budget tabled this week, instead, provides just $40-million a year for the next five years "to help support First Nations to achieve better education outcomes."

Mr. Bellegarde said he has talked with Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt on two occasions about restarting the process of negotiating a new deal for on-reserve education that would respect First Nations' jurisdiction and address the obvious disparities. But "there is no formal response to our request for that process."

When the government was asked Wednesday during the daily Question Period in the House of Commons to explain why it is not honouring the pledge it made last year to increase funding for First Nations' schools, Mr. Valcourt said his priority was to decrease the burden on taxpayers.

"Unlike the Liberals and unlike the NDP, whose mantra is increase taxes for every Canadian family," he replied, "we on this side of the House believe that they should get the money back in their pockets."

Not all aboriginal groups expressed disappointment with the budget.

Terry Audla, the president of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, said in a release that he welcomed an investment of $17-million to expand the emergency response capacity in the Arctic, and $34-million for navigational warning services in the Northwest Passage and other Arctic waters. Mr. Audla also praised the government's plan to spend $5.7-million to secure new markets for Canadian seal products.

Direct Link: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/afn-chief-bellegarde-says-status-quo-budget-offers-little-for-first-nations/article24069352/

Liard First Nation opens office to 3rd party manager

FN members say it's the first time Ganhada goes into First Nation office, after 7 months in charge

CBC News Posted: Apr 23, 2015 2:29 PM CT Last Updated: Apr 23, 2015 3:02 PM CT



Liard First Nation members say Ganhada was allowed into the band offices for the first time on Thursday, more than seven months after taking over as third party manager. (Karen McColl/CBC)

More than seven months after taking over administration of the Liard First Nation, a government-appointed third party manager was allowed into the First Nation office on Thursday. Community members says it's the first time that has happened.

It follows a heated meeting the day before, between First Nation members, federal representatives and the third party manager, Ganhada.

Wednesday's meeting was intended to provide information to First Nation members about Ganhada's delivery of health and social programs. It was also a chance for community members to voice concerns.

The meeting was not a great success, according to some.



Alfred Chief says he's going to keep speaking out, even if he gets a negative reaction. He says he has to do it for his children and grandchildren. (Karen McColl/CBC)

"I feel like I never accomplished anything," says First Nation member Alfred Chief, who walked out early. He had questions about rent money, paid by First Nations members, not going towards home repairs.

Chief says he also questioned Liard First Nation Chief Daniel Morris about fiscal accountability, but says he didn't get a decent answer. Chief says people at the meeting told him he had a 'negative attitude', and he left feeling "disgusted and disappointed."

The departments of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, and Health Canada hosted the meeting. First Nation members invited CBC to attend, but federal representatives wouldn't open the door to reporters.

The federal government has said that essential programs, such as income assistance and educational supports, have been maintained under Ganhada, but some community members say things have fallen through the cracks.

"A lot of our elders are getting sick and there's not funding or programs," says community member Neona Young. "We pretty much lost all of our programs that we did have."



Neona Young leaves a Liard First Nation meeting on Wednesday that was attended by about 50 people. She doesn't think much was accomplished at the meeting. (Karen McColl/CBC)

Young says her community is hurting, and needs more answers from Ganhada.

The "Aboriginal-owned" Vancouver consulting firm was appointed in September, after the Liard First Nation defaulted on several funding obligations, including its yearly audit.

It's not clear whether Ganhada's access to the First Nation office on Thursday means the First Nation has opened all of its books. The federal government said on Wednesday the chief and council had not yet provided access to the First Nation's finances.

That frustrates Alfred Chief.

"If they got nothing to hide, they should have no reason not to work with the third party and get all the people that were working back to work," he says.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/liard-first-nation-opens-office-to-3rd-party-manager-1.3046079

Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

NRCan releases updated map of Canada

New representation of the country displays a few Inuit language place names

NUNATSIAQ NEWS, April 17, 2015 - 5:58 am



Here's the new map of Canada that Natural Resources Canada released April 16. (IMAGE COURTESY OF NRCAN)

The federal Department of Natural Resources unveiled the latest version of its map of Canada April 16, with a few Inuit language place names scattered on it here and there.

Greg Rickford, the natural resources minister, revealed the map at an event held inside a school in Kenora, Ont.

The updated map shows Canada's 200-mile offshore economic zone, winter roads in northern Canada, the route of the Trans-Canada Highway, and other roads, railway lines and ferry routes.

“This updated map will help Canadians better understand our evolving country,” Rickford said.

The new representation of the country also contains a few Inuit language place names, most of them in north and central Baffin and in the Inuvialuit region of the Northwest Territories.

Other than the well-known northern village names that have been used in Nunavik since the early1980s, there are no Inuit language place names marked on the Nunavik section of the map.

There are none marked on the Labrador section either.

The community on the Hudson Bay coast of northern Quebec once known as “Great Whale River” is marked as Kuujjuarapik, but the Cree name, Whapmagoostui, is missing. The Nunavik region is not delineated either.

A headland on the southeast corner of Bylot Island is now marked as “Niaqunngut” and a body of water near Pond Inlet is now marked as “Tasiujaq.”

The long inlet behind the community of Clyde River is now marked “Kangiqtuugaapik,” which is also the Roman orthography representation of Clyde River’s Inuit language name.

In the NWT, Prince of Wales Strait, between Banks Island and Victoria Island, is now marked “Ikirahak.”

“By adding the Inuktitut names of places in Canada’s North, we not only recognize the importance of Inuit culture but demonstrate our government’s commitment to celebrating our northern history,” Environment Minister Leona Aglukkaq, also Nunavut’s MP, said in a news release.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nrcan_unveils_updated_map_of_canada/

First Nations crowdsourcing cash to save caribou

Mike CARTER / Alaska Highway News
April 17, 2015 07:37 AM



Pregnant Northern Caribou cows feed on lichen and pellets at a trough inside the secured maternity pen in their native range outside of Chetwynd. - Handout file photo

A group led by First Nations in the South Peace wants to crowdsource $50,000 to continue a project aimed at saving the Klinse-Za (clin-see-za) caribou herd from extinction.

The herd has been threatened by increased wolf predation, which is a result of resource development in the herd's natural territory, according to First Nations and the Ministry of Environment.

Once so plentiful they were described by First Nations elders as being like "bugs on the landscape," according to West Moberly First Nation chief Roland Willson, caribou numbers have decreased to just 1,100 in all the of the South Peace and only roughly 30 in the Klinse-Za herd.

The dwindling numbers in the territories of the Saulteau and West Moberly First Nations just north of Chetwynd inspired a penning project that began in April 2014 run by a group called the Peace Northern Caribou Committee.

For the second year in a row, pregnant caribou were captured and penned in March in an effort to decrease the number of animals lost during the critical calving season, which lasts until July.

The project in the past received support from industrial and government partners.

A caribou action plan developed in 2013 by the West Moberly First Nation came up with the project for the Klinse-Za herd.

Provincial government efforts to curb wolf predation of caribou in the South Peace have included a controversial plan to cull wolves by shooting them from helicopters with high powered rifles.

"Due to the habitat loss and upset predator/prey dynamics caused by decades of unsustainable resource development, caribou in the entire South Peace region now

number only 1,100 and are in rapid decline," a 2013 release on the caribou action plan from the West Moberly First Nation states.

The Klinse-Za herd numbered less than 20 animals then, but increased in size after last year's successful maternity penning.

In April 2014, with the help of veterinarians, 10 pregnant cows were tranquilized, radio collared and enclosed in a seven hectare pen where they were allowed to give birth in a protected area, under the watch of First Nations shepherds and wildlife biologists who set up camp near the site.

They were fed a diet of lichen harvested from the area, supplemented by pellets. The young caribou and their mothers will remain in captivity until they are big enough to flee predators.

In July, 10 cows and nine calves will be released.

"By implementing the project, the First Nations partners are taking steps to avert [destruction] of the Klinse-Za herd and demonstrating the viability of maternal penning to help bolster vulnerable caribou populations in the South Peace," a release from the Peace Northern Caribou Committee (PNCC) states.

Eleven more pregnant caribou cows were safely transported to the pen on March 24 to carry out the last trimester of pregnancy and deliver their calves apart from the pressures they normally face in the wild.

"Despite being a labour of love for everyone involved, the care and attention provided to the animals does come at a significant cost," the PNCC said.

http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/news/local-news/first-nations-crowdsourcing-cash-to-save-caribou-1.1826991#sthash.JQESxkmD.dpuf

Inuit want court to overturn approval of offshore seismic tests



Ice floes float in Baffin Bay above the Arctic circle on July 10, 2008. (Jonathan Hayward / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

Bob Weber, The Canadian Press
Published Monday, April 20, 2015 4:19AM EDT

TORONTO - A tiny Inuit village is to ask a federal court today to overturn a regulatory decision that OKs offshore energy exploration.

“Our hunting culture is at stake,” said Jerry Natanine, mayor of Clyde River, a Nunavut community of about 1,000 people about midway along the eastern coast of Baffin Island.

The judicial review in Toronto is considering last June's National Energy Board approval of a Norwegian consortium's plan for a five-year program of seismic tests in Davis Strait along the island's entire length. The testing, which uses loud, high-intensity sounds to help map the sea floor and the geology underneath, is to begin this summer.

The people of Clyde River have concerns about the impact those sounds could have on the marine mammals and fish they depend on.

And they have plenty of company.

The Baffin Mayors Forum, made up of all the communities on Baffin Island, joined with Clyde River at the original energy board hearings, and regional and territorial Inuit groups agree the tests are a bad idea.

So does the Nunavut Marine Council, which represents Nunavut's wildlife management bodies.

A wide spectrum of 44 non-governmental groups and individuals are also supporting Clyde River: from Greenpeace, the Sierra Club and Amnesty International to faith-based groups such as KAIROS. It's an unusual coalition, in that Inuit groups have often viewed such southern groups with suspicion.

“This is a human rights issue,” said Warren Bernauer, who's helping co-ordinate Clyde River's supporters and organizing a rally with a feast of seal and whale meat outside the courthouse.

“We're still in a situation where these proposals are being shoved down the throats of the people of Nunavut.”

Natanine said he hopes the judicial review will stop testing until a strategic environmental assessment is complete. That assessment, being conducted by the federal government, is to make recommendations on which areas should be open to development and which ones should remain closed.

The approval comes with conditions that include having a marine mammal observer on the seismic vessel who would be able to stop testing if an animal is spotted within 500 metres.

But scientists say spotters can miss 80 per cent of whales in an area.

Research also has suggested seismic tests are linked to a long list of stress behaviours. Fin whales have stopped singing. Sperm whales seem to grow sluggish and eat less. Most whales and dolphins leave.

One paper filed with the board suggested at least 37 marine species have been shown to be affected by seismic air-gun noise.

Natanine said his people don't oppose development. They just want answers about its possible consequences - and a better shot at reaping some of the benefits from resources under waters they consider their birthright.

“When it first started, we supported it because we saw it as an opportunity,” Natanine said. “As things went on, we started realizing that the company just wants to come in and get want they want and then leave.

“We're not in support of any of that.”

Direct Link: http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/inuit-want-court-to-overturn-approval-of-offshore-seismic-tests-1.2335237

B.C. First Nations woman to receive world's richest enviro prize for mine fight

By Dene Moore | Daily Brew – 21 hours ago



Marilyn Baptiste poses on the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation, Nemiah Valley, B.C., in this undated handout photo. …

A British Columbia First Nations woman who spearheaded the fight against a multibillion-dollar gold mine is one of this year's recipients of the richest environmental award in the world.

Marilyn Baptiste will be honoured tonight with the Goldman Environmental Prize, a $175,000 award handed out annually to six grassroots activists around the world.

Baptiste, the former chief of the Xeni Gwet'in First Nation in the B.C. Interior, is being recognized for her work against the New Prosperity gold and copper mine proposed by Taseko Mines Ltd.

"At first of course it was 'no, no, I'm good. Find someone else,'" she says with a laugh.

But the award is shining an international spotlight on her community and their cause, she says.

"These kinds of recognitions do help in our campaign and our fight."

Taseko has twice applied for environmental approval to mine what is believed to be the tenth-largest gold deposit in the world, located in the traditional territory of the Tsilhqot'in Nations 550 kilometres northeast of Vancouver.

The province has approved the project but the federal government has twice rejected the proposal following contentious environmental assessment hearings involving the Tsilhqot'in and several environmental groups.

The company has asked the federal court to overturn that decision and is also suing the Wilderness Committee environmental group for defamation over its comments on the mine.

The original mine project proposed draining a lake of significance to the Tsilhqot'in for use as a tailings pond. The revised proposal said Fish Lake, or Teztan Biny, could be saved and the tailings pond built elsewhere.

The Canadian Environment Assessment Agency panel said it did not believe the revised project could avoid contaminating the lake.

The Tsilhqot'in also recently won an historic court victory establishing First Nations' land title in Canada.

The Goldman committee says Baptiste, who grew up in the Nemiah Valley and learned to fish and forage as her people had for centuries, helped lead her community in their battle over Fish Lake.

She followed in her father's footsteps and was elected as chief of the Xeni Gwet'in in 2008.

At one point, she erected a one-woman blockade to stop company crews from reaching the site.

Fight not over

Baptiste anticipates a third proposal from the company. "It's definitely not over yet," she tells Yahoo Canada News.

"I knew definitely it would be a long, ongoing process and at the very beginning, but I didn't know all of the workings of these processes."

She seems dug in to continue the fight.

"I was born into this – we all are, as Indigenous people, born into this. We all have a part in it," she says.

Her community is celebrating with her.

"Marilyn worked tirelessly with community and other Tsilhqot'in Chiefs to protect Tsilhqot'in lands from the Prosperity/New Prosperity projects and this prestigious award is a great encouragement to all of us," Xeni Gwet'in Chief Roger William says in a statement.

The ceremony will be held Monday night in San Francisco.

The prize "recognizes individuals for sustained and significant efforts to protect and enhance the natural environment, often at great personal risk," says the Goldman committee.

Baptiste will be honoured along with Myanmar activist Mhint Zaw, who launched a movement that stopped construction of the Myitsone Dam; Haitian activist Jean Wiener, who led the effort to establish the country's first marine protected area; Kenya's Phyllis Omido, who organized her community to shut down a lead smelter in Mombasa after discovering her own breast milk was tainted with lead; Howard Wood, who spearheaded the campaign that established Scotland's first marine protected area; and Berta Caceres of Honduras, who rallied the Indigenous Lenca people to fight the Agua Zarca dam.

Direct Link: https://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/dailybrew/b-c-first-nations-woman-to-receive-worlds-175613736.html

Canada's Own Oil Pipeline Problem

The proposed Northern Gateway, part of Canadian effort to boost oil exports to Asia, runs up against First Nations' concerns for environment, culture



The Tl'azt'en First Nation, whose Tache Reserve is on Stuart Lake in British Columbia, is fighting Enbridge's plan to build the Northern Gateway oil pipeline alongside their territory.

By
Alistair MacDonald and
Paul Vieira
April 19, 2015 5:31 p.m. ET

TACHE RESERVE, British Columbia—A proposed 730-mile pipeline to ship Canadian oil to a West Coast port brings with it the promise of 4,000 or more jobs along a route that would run through impoverished indigenous communities.

But Chief Justa Monk, who runs a reserve with an unemployment rate that hits 70%, wants none of them—and pledges to block the pipeline alongside the reserve's territory.

It is another hurdle in Canada's quest to become an energy superpower, even as political struggles in Washington continue to delay a different, better-known Canadian pipeline—TransCanada Corp.'s Keystone XL, which would carry Canadian oil south across the U.S. to the Gulf Coast.

Chief Monk's Tl'azt'en Nation, which claims land of 30,100 square miles in northern British Columbia, sits alongside the proposed path of Enbridge Inc.'s Northern Gateway, a pipeline that Ottawa sees as a crucial piece of the energy infrastructure that will lessen Canada's almost total dependence on U.S. demand.

Instead, the Tl'azt'en and other native bands have been emboldened by a recent Supreme Court of Canada decision on aboriginal land rights to fight a project they say risks damaging their environment and culture. First Nations' territory covers much of British

Columbia's West Coast, so the builder of the US$6.3 billion pipeline must find a way to work with the groups to reach the port in Kitimat, where ocean tankers would be filled with oil bound for fast-growing Asian markets.

The clash comes as Ottawa has pledged to sell more oil outside the U.S., where surging supply means Canadian oil trades at a discount—even amid a six-year low in overall oil prices. And as a series of fiery oil-train derailments has brought scrutiny and tougher regulations on rail shipments, oil sands producers and policy makers have made finishing the Gateway pipeline a priority. The pipeline's proposed capacity of 525,000 barrels of oil a day compares with Canada's total exports of about three million barrels a day.

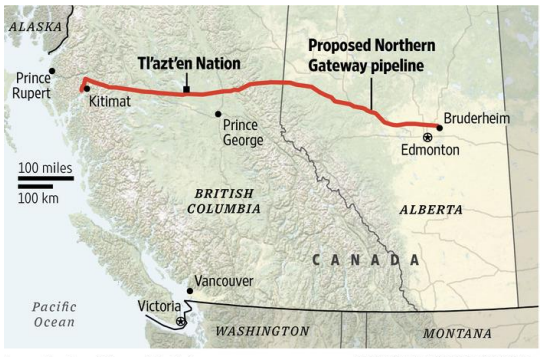
Many are opposed

Along with the Tl'azt'en, First Nations including Gitxaala, Nak'azdli, Nadleh Whut'en and others have pledged to block the Enbridge pipeline, and aboriginal groups have filed seven separate lawsuits in the Federal Court of Appeal that aim to stop it. Around half the 50 First Nations along the route have yet to back the pipeline, according to Enbridge. First Nations are the largest category of aboriginal people in Canada, which also include Inuit and Métis.

Indeed, the majority of all British Columbia residents say they oppose or want to delay the project, according to public-opinion polls, raising questions on about 400 miles of the pipeline's planned route.

The pipeline dispute is one of a number pitting companies trying to mine Canada's oil and mineral riches against the country's First Nations—its poorest and fastest-growing demographic—as they exercise a growing power to implement protections for the environment and to ensure economic benefits.

Native and environmental protesters have thrown into doubt an expansion of Kinder Morgan Inc. 's Trans Mountain Pipeline outside of Vancouver, and object to a proposed TransCanada pipeline that would ship crude from Alberta to Atlantic Canada.



Source: Northern Gateway (pipeline) THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Last fall, McEwen Mining Inc. pulled out of exploring for gold in northern Ontario after local First Nations demanded consultation and a confidential agreement on giving them a

share of any find, Rob McEwen, the company's founder and CEO said. And in December, the government of New Brunswick introduced a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing for oil and gas after months of protests from aboriginal groups.

In British Columbia, Chief Monk took a stand on Gateway at a meeting between First Nation chiefs and the provincial government in September. "I told them, 100% of our territory is owned by the Tl'azt'en Nation and there is no activity on it if we don't give our consent," he said in a recent interview.

As he talked during the interview, the chief, who speaks for the tribe's leadership council, opened an email he had received from the pipeline's operator, Enbridge, asking for a meeting.

"I don't even talk to them. I am not interested," he said.

By law, native groups must be consulted before land development to accommodate their concerns. But since only eight of British Columbia's 198 First Nations have settled treaties over land claims, final decisions over land use are made by the provincial government. First Nations' desires can be overturned if a court is persuaded that the parties involved fulfilled their duty to consult and accommodate them. The Tl'azt'en Nation doesn't have a land treaty.

The national government issued a license for Enbridge last summer to proceed with Gateway as long as it fulfilled certain conditions, but the British Columbia provincial government has yet to sign off on the plan. It added its own conditions that must be met, including that aboriginal concerns are addressed.

Centuries of thorny legal issues surrounding aboriginal land rights became more complex in June, when a ruling from Canada's top court gave natives new leverage over companies operating on their traditional lands.

The court granted the Tsilhqot'in, a First Nation in British Columbia, title over part of its land for the first time, giving the group the right to bar logging on its territory without approval. In March, the Nation said it was banning all mining and commercial logging on its land.



Freddy, left, and Roger Williams in front of Roger's house on the Tache Reserve. Widespread unemployment has made life there ‘chaos,’ Freddy says. Photo: ALISTAIR MACDONALD/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

The judgment also outlined what Canadian native groups with unresolved land claims must demonstrate to either the government or the courts to gain title over their lands, and what rights come with title. Legal scholars and others say this opens the door for other aboriginal groups across the country with unresolved land claims to gain control of their territory.

“What this means is we have a new set of owners for many of the attractive resource areas in Canada,” said Harry Swain, former deputy minister at Canada’s aboriginal affairs department. “You must accommodate their interests and bring them into the deal.”

Scholars say claims could take years to be finalized through negotiations or the courts, and complications include the fact that the country’s provinces have jurisdiction over land use and natural resources, while the federal government controls aboriginal policy.

In the U.S., for comparison, companies generally need tribal permission to develop resources on reservations. Development that impacts treaty rights off-reservation, such as natives’ ability to fish and hunt on traditional lands, also typically needs to be cleared by the tribe, according to James Meggesto, an expert on Indian law at Holland & Knight in Washington, D.C.

Employment plan

To bring the Tl’azt’en and other First Nations along the pipeline’s proposed route on board, Enbridge says it will procure materials from native-owned suppliers and offer training opportunities and jobs, guaranteeing that aboriginals will make up 15% of total employment on the pipeline.

The company also has set aside a 10% equity stake that First Nations can buy in the project and says it will help them obtain the financing needed to afford the purchase. Enbridge says it has met with representatives of Tl’azt’en and incorporated their ideas over the past four years.

The company says the current drop in the oil price doesn’t affect its plans for the Gateway pipeline, which it expects to be in operation for decades.


Carissa Duncan, 22, says her generation feels little confidence in its future and little connection to its past. Photo: ALISTAIR MACDONALD/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

But the people who live on the Tache Reserve are nearly universally against the project, and Chief Monk says the environmental risk is too great to even discuss it.

Among many Tl'azt'en, who see themselves as custodians of the land, the pipeline represents a threat to their way of life. Many blame the last major piece of infrastructure—a road built in the late 1960s that connects them to a local highway and ended centuries of relative isolation—for bringing drugs, alcohol and welfare, underscoring a long-rooted mistrust of what they see as "encroaching Canada."

Darcy Isadore, even though he is unemployed, said he wants no jobs associated with the pipeline. He hunts moose and fishes salmon and said there is a risk of contamination if there were a spill from Gateway. Mr. Isadore, wearing thick rubber fishing boots, had a moose hanging in a nearby smoke house ready for a wake for a local funeral. "The pipeline will change all that, it will poison the land," he said.

Mr. Isadore and others pointed to an Imperial Metals Corp. copper mine in the province that spilled more than a billion gallons of waste material, including arsenic, into waterways in August. Imperial Metals says that there haven't been negative effects on wildlife and that the company is cleaning up the spill.

Enbridge has promised a slew of protections for Gateway, including 24-hour monitoring at pump stations and control centers, aerial surveillance and 132 valves that can cut off oil flow to any leaks.

The National Energy Board, Canada's main regulator, says pipelines are safe, rarely spill and that all the oil spilled between 2011 and 2013, an average of 883 barrels a year, was recovered.

Ottawa also says a bill now before the legislature will broaden companies' responsibility for spills and give the NEB new powers to force operators to pay for cleanup costs associated with pipeline leaks.

Election issue

A standoff on Gateway could put off potential overseas buyers of Canada's crude, especially if the U.S. moves to allow more oil exports. Oil and mining executives from energy-hungry Asian nations, such as China, have expressed frustration with the process of dealing with Canada's First Nations and the lengthy pipeline approval process as they look to invest. In September, the president of Enbridge, John Carruthers, said that efforts to win over British Columbia aboriginals have pushed the project back from its 2018 start date to an unspecified time.

The pipeline project could emerge as a thorny issue in Canada's 2015 election, likely in the fall, as the three main parties compete for votes in British Columbia. The ruling Conservative Party has toned down its support amid negative public opinion. The opposition New Democratic and Liberal parties have vowed to revoke the license granted to Enbridge if elected.

Natives' growing numbers in Canada are adding to their clout on a range of issues. They currently account for 4.3% of Canadians and will grow to 5.3% of the country by 2030; that compares to 1.7% and 2.3% respectively for Native Americans in the U.S., according to government statistics.

But by every measure of social welfare, from rates of infant mortality to literacy to suicide, the group remains on the margins of Canadian society. In 2011, an aboriginal was about three times as likely to be unemployed than the average Canadian and earned two-thirds the average income, according to the most recent government data. Aboriginals formed 23% of Canada's federal prison population in 2014, and they are three times more likely to be assaulted than most Canadians.

Aboriginal groups say the dismal quality of life feeds distrust of Canada, even as the corrosive aspects of modern life have taken hold on many reserves.

On the Tache Reserve, close to 90% of residents over 14 abuse alcohol, drugs or prescription medications, Nation officials say. On a recent visit, many of the three-room homes had broken windows despite freezing temperatures and rotten floorboards, and packs of dogs wandered through unpaved streets.

Tl'azt'en officials say they are considering three other requests for resource development that they see as less risky to the environment: a gas pipeline and two mines. They say they are offering training and education for locals to take part in approved resource development, from forestry to some mines, and in other professions, such as law. But such programs are often not taken up, according to Olivia Roberts, the Nation's Employment Services Coordinator.



Widespread poverty can be seen on the Tl'azt'en's Tache Reserve. Photo: ALISTAIR MACDONALD/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Last summer, she says she booked two local men on six-month pipeline engineer training courses. Both quit within two weeks.

"Everybody is unemployed and it's chaos here," said Freddy Williams, motioning to his brother's house, where a fistfight between two men had just erupted. Wearing a cap that said Native Pride, Mr. Williams said that though currently unemployed he gets work in the tourism industry and worries about the effects of potential pollution on that.

Carissa Duncan, 22, who was also against the Enbridge pipeline, describes a young generation that feels little confidence in its future and little connection to its past.

"Maybe I am scared of the future," said Ms. Duncan, whose parents as children were both removed from the reserve and forced to attend boarding schools as part of a Canadian government policy that lasted into the 1980s meant to assimilate aboriginals into Canadian culture.

Ms. Duncan, who in the past has struggled with addiction and who failed to finish high school, recalls how in early childhood her now deceased grandparents took her out into the country to learn to hunt. "They tell us to go back to the old ways, but there is nobody to teach us the old ways," she said.

—Chester Dawson contributed to this article.

Direct Link: http://www.wsj.com/articles/canadas-own-oil-pipeline-problem-1429479110

Commentary: My wish for prosperity without oil

Russian indigenous leader cautions Inuit about resource development

SPECIAL TO NUNATSIAQ NEWS, April 20, 2015 - 4:39 pm



Nikolay Rochev, a Komi leader from Russia, is taking the opportunity to reach out to northerners during the Arctic Council ministerial meeting in Iqaluit April 24 and April 25 to caution Inuit, and world leaders, about oil and gas development on Indigenous lands. (PHOTO COURTESY OF GREENPEACE RUSSIA)

NIKOLAY ROCHEV

My name is Nikolay. I am of the Komi peoples and come from the region of the same name in the north of Russia. I will soon be visiting Canada and the city of Iqaluit in the lands of the Nunavummiut for the first time.

I used to teach geography and have studied about Inuit lands and the Canadian Arctic. I am not visiting only to meet my Inuit brothers and sisters and enjoy the wonders of this great country, but also to share the story of my people.

I wish I came here with an uplifting tale but that is unfortunately not the case. Instead it is a story of despair, of betrayal and of dismay. It is a cautionary tale, but at the same time a desperate cry for help.

Our forefathers did not necessarily thrive, but they lived from the land and the rivers, from the forests and the marsh. Like many in Canada's North, they lived in tundra.

It wasn't easy, but it was honest, hard work. My grandfathers were prosperous reindeer herders, but when the Soviet time came they lost everything. Unfortunately, my father could not be a reindeer herder, but he still lived close to nature.

He was a hunter and a fisherman — the authorities could not take away the forest and the rivers from people — but now this is exactly what the oil companies have done. They took away our forests and rivers, polluting them beyond repair.

In my youth, when they found oil, everything changed. We were promised by the oil industry that we no longer would have to fear the harsh winters, the loss of our reindeer and the uncertainty of tomorrow.

We were told that the oil was the dawn of a new beginning. And indeed it was a new beginning, but not the one that we had hoped for — nor one that we could have imagined even in our worst nightmares.

I no longer believe in the promises of the oil companies or the government after what they have done to my land and my people.

Soon the oil started to pollute our rivers and our soil and it became evident that the future wasn't looking brighter. Today, nothing is the same as it was before the oil companies arrived. Today, our lands are ruined, our fish are gone and every day is a struggle.

Government officials are mostly ignoring the problems and the oil companies only care about their profit.

We experience new spills almost daily and every year as spring comes, the rivers are colored black as the melting ice and snow reveal the latest winter's spills and transport the thick black liquid into our beautiful rivers, which we still depend on for food and water.

Our traditional reindeer herding has almost been made impossible. It is like finding your way through a maze of pipelines and oil spills, walking through areas where the air is thick from flaring.

Our reindeer are not able to differ between edible grass and weeds and the ones that contain the toxic components from oil, and therefore often die or become ill from the pollution.

Parts of the beautiful Pechora Basin, which used to hold a myriad of life, are completely dead and when we fish in the rivers, the fish we catch often are deformed or contaminated with oil. I do not dare to think about the consequences of our children swimming in and drinking from the same rivers.

Most of us, who used to be stewards of the lands of the North, have experienced betrayal from our governments. We have had promises given and then broken in an instant.

We have seen the impacts of so-called development, where we are left on the sidelines — except for when there's a price to be paid. Then it is all of a sudden a price that we have to pay "in the name of progress."

But their idea of progress is certainly not progress according to the Komi people. For us, it is a damnation of what we hold dear — our water, land, air and livelihood.

I know that we do not all agree on the means for progress. I do for good reasons want the oil industry out of my homelands — and I never want them back again.

But no matter what, we must stand together in our struggle for our rights and for the protection of our lands. While I'm in Iqaluit, so too will be gatekeepers of our future: The foreign ministers from all the Arctic countries are gathering as part of the Arctic Council.

They talk about caring and about protecting our rights, but let no one misunderstand this: they represent exactly the same governments who have profited from our destruction.

Sometimes I wonder if it is too late for my homeland, but I am not willing to give up yet. This is my cry for help: my peoples and I cannot win this battle alone. We need you to stand with us. We need you to demand action from the Arctic Council and from the organizations which are supposed to represent us.

My wish for education for the young, care for the old and prosperity for everyone is just as strong as yours. My dreams are the same, but I no longer want what they call progress.

I want to define my own future, I want development which does not kill our lands. I want to be able to tell the same tales under the stars to my grandchildren as my grandparents told me. And I hope that you will stand with me in this.

Nikolay Rochev is a Komi indigenous leader from Russia. He will speak about the impacts of the oil industry on the Komi people, their lands, and their way of life in Iqaluit at the Anglican Parish Hall on Sunday, 26 April 2015 at 1:00 PM, This event is hosted by Greenpeace.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674my_wish_for_prosperity_without_oil/

Occupation of premier's office ends as meetings planned with First Nations over human-waste spreading in Okanagan

The Canadian Press April 21, 2015



The office of B.C. Environment Mminister Mary Polak has agreed to ‘high-level’ talks with First Nations leaders who were occupying Premier Christy Clark’s West Kelowna constituency office.

WEST KELOWNA, B.C. — First Nations leaders say the occupation of Premier Christy Clark’s constituency office is over because the government has agreed to talk about the spread of treated human waste on private and public lands in the Nicola Valley.

Four chiefs and a representative from a fifth First Nation began their sit-in of Clark’s West Kelowna office on April 15.

At the time, Chief Aaron Sam of the Lower Nicola Indian Band said leaders had met Environment Minister Mary Polak twice and asked her to disclose where the waste was being spread, but the government only provided a partial list.

The leaders said they were worried about impacts on land, water, traditional foods and health, noting the government is legally obligated to consult with aboriginals.

But the chiefs issued a news release late Monday afternoon, saying the government has committed to a high-level meeting to resolve their ongoing concerns about biowaste operations.

The company contracted to spread the waste, **BioCentral**, has said biosolids are used around the world to rejuvenate soil, and it had all the required permits, licences and permissions.

“It is time to move forward with resolving this issue on a government-to-government basis,” said Coldwater Band Chief Lee Spahan.

“We are ending our occupation today on the expectation that the province will come tomorrow prepared to sit down and engage with us in a respectful process that properly addresses our concerns.”

The leaders say they want the province to collaborate on a process to gather and share information about biowaste, manage and address impacts, and protect lands and wildlife in the valley.

- See more at:
http://www.theprovince.com/Occupation+premier+office+ends+meetings+planned+with+First+Nations+over+human+waste+spreading/10991128/story.html#sthash.KQp4rjvB.dpuf

Vaughn Palmer: BC Hydro compensation offers to First Nations revealed in court

Site C: Land, $6.5 million upfront to ‘accommodate residual impacts’ for bands opposed to project

By Vaughn Palmer, Vancouver Sun columnist April 21, 2015



This section of the Peace River Valley would be flooded by the Site C dam. Photo: Graham Osborne

VICTORIA — BC Hydro has laid out the land and cash being offered to a trio of First Nations whose traditional territories would be impacted by construction of the proposed hydroelectric dam at Site C on the Peace River.

The amounts were disclosed by Hydro earlier this month in one of the multiple court cases involving Site C, this one a challenge to the project filed in B.C. Supreme Court by the West Moberly First Nation, the Prophet River First Nation, and the McLeod Lake Indian Band.

Defending the decision to proceed with construction later this year, Hydro’s court filing said the specific offers were intended to “directly accommodate the residual impacts” of the controversial project on the three First Nations.

“The offer to West Moberly includes the potential transfer of 2,500 to 3,000 acres of provincial Crown land; $3,500,000 in lump-sum payments; $350,000 per year for 70 years adjusted annually; as well as other measures.”

“The offer to Prophet River includes a $1,000,000 lump-sum payment; the potential establishment of land protection measures for certain parcels of Crown land, as well as other measures.”

As for McLeod Lake, terms include “the potential transfer of 2,500 acres of provincial Crown land; $2,000,000 in lump-sum payments; $250,000 per year for 70 years adjusted annually; as well as other measures.”

Combined, the three offers would deliver $6.5 million upfront and another $42 million over 70 years. The land offer translates into a third of the 6,500 hectares that would be either submerged or occupied by the dam, generating station and reservoir.

The offers are intended to address the findings of the recent federal-provincial joint review panel regarding the impact of the project on First Nations’ hunting, fishing, trapping and other traditional activities.

“The panel found that the project was likely to cause significant adverse effects on particular uses by the members of some First Nations and that those effects cannot be mitigated,” as Hydro itself acknowledged.

“Other measures” cited by Hydro includes access for all three First Nations to a further compensation fund totalling $10 million. The Crown corporation would also designate significant tracts of land elsewhere as “winter range” for deer, moose and other ungulates.

Plus Hydro says it has already provided almost $6 million to native groups in the region to fund research and participation in the environmental review of the project and other consultations, going back more than seven years.

If that sounds like a lot of public funding for three native nations with a combined membership (estimated by Hydro) at just over 1,000 people, it has to be weighed against the economics of Site C as a whole.

The latest all-in cost estimate for the project, interest and contingencies included, is approaching $9 billion. Based on Hydro’s own costing of $83 a megawatt hour for an annual output of 5,100 gigawatt hours of energy, Site C will be producing $400 million worth of electricity a year.

On those expectations, the above-cited quantities of land and cash should probably be regarded as opening offers, falling short of any likely area of settlement with the three First Nations, presuming there is one.

For as Hydro also notes in the court filing, all three are part of the Treaty 8 group of First Nations, which have together adopted a stance of “emphatic opposition” to Site C.

“Neither Prophet River nor West Moberly have accepted BC Hydro’s offer or sought to enter negotiations regarding the offer,” the company further conceded. McLeod Lake has entered into negotiations, but so far without results.

In the case of West Moberly, “emphatic opposition” is somewhat less pithy than the actual words of Chief Roland Willson last December when the B.C. Liberals green-lighted Hydro to proceed with Site C.

“Ill-advised,” “incredibly stupid” and “a spit in the face,” he called it, vowing to stop Site C by all legal means available. This action being one among an estimated half-dozen others, several involving First Nations.

Also in court this week was the Peace River Landowners Association, seeking to overturn the environmental approval of the project as fatally flawed. Then there’s the threat of legal action from unionized construction workers, seeking to establish fair wages and working conditions on the site, as per Hydro projects a generation ago.

The Liberals are resisting what they regard as preferential treatment of the unions, saying it might disadvantage non-union bidders including native-owned companies, thereby compromising their promises of jobs and benefits for First Nations in the region.

Debatable, like many other aspects of Site C.

In the absence of a court-imposed injunction, the Liberals and BC Hydro continue to profess their intentions to proceed with construction of Site C later this year.

The urgency is two-fold they say, with each delay adding tens of millions of dollars to the budget and there being only a narrow window to proceed with construction between spring run-off and winter freeze-up.

Hence the question this week to Energy Minister Bill Bennett — namely, in light of all the action in the courts, is he still confident that construction will get underway later this year?

“I am confident that we’ll have shovels in the ground sometime this summer,” he replied, speaking mostly for himself and not for anyone observing this imbroglio from the sidelines.

Direct Link:
http://www.vancouversun.com/Vaughn+Palmer+Hydro+compensation+offers+First+Nations+revealed+court/10992377/story.html

Funding problems put CEMA future at risk

By Vincent McDermott

Wednesday, April 22, 2015 5:10:51 MDT PM



CEMA co-ordinator Peter Fortna listens to elders from several First Nations and Metis communities who attended a networking and feedback event hosted by the local environmental group. TODAY FILE PHOTO

A Wood Buffalo group tasked with proposing oilsands policy could scale back operations this summer, after starting 2015 with the same uncertainty it has faced since 2011.

According to Glen Semenchuk, executive director for the Cumulative Environmental Management Association, industry groups are advocating further cutting the group's funding.

"We've been running on a cycle where we are funded year-to-year and every year turns into a battle to finalize our budget," he said. "We've been through this for more than three years and it's too hard on our staff when no one knows what the future is going to bring."

The creation of JOSM, LARP and AEMERA has left CAPP viewing CEMA as redundant. Semenchuk says each year, industry questions the organization's financial worth with increasing skepticism.

In a brief email, CAPP spokesperson Chelsie Klassen says CEMA is currently funded on a quarterly basis. Although a review of CEMA's future is taking place, Klassen says the Calgary-based lobby group already views CEMA's mandate as complete.

"There is a funding review occurring now that CEMA's original mandate is complete and the environmental monitoring programs are in place," Klassen wrote.

By the end of June, Semenchuk says CEMA should know if they will scale back operations.

"If that happens, we will make sure our final reports are in and clean up any recommendations," he said. "Then everyone in the organization, from our members to

staff, have to start thinking of their own future, because we won't be able to guarantee any future with CEMA."

CEMA, created in 2001 by former premier Ralph Klein, proposes policies related to wildlife protection and reducing oilsands polution. The agency prides itself as being the only scientific panel to include traditional knowledge from aboriginal groups. Policy recommendations are approved through consensus.

CEMA's $5-million budget comes from industry. Yet, that's $4 million short from what was proposed in 2011. Semenchuk, who was in Ottawa on Wednesday pitching CEMA to federal partners, says $7 million would help CEMA "operate comfortably."

"Our stakeholders all have an equal say in policies. There is nobody in the oilsands who works like that," he said.

The Human Environment Group, which authored a report on CEMA's relevance for the provincial government last October, also doubts CEMA is past its prime.

"CEMA has demonstrated its ability to work through tough issues and deliver products or documents that present multiple perspectives," the report states.

HEG recommends CEMA expand its geographic outreach and begin tackling socioeconomic issues in the oilsands. Semenchuk says the proposal is an exciting one, but requires more members and new working groups, neither of which are cheap.

"Every year we've been forced to knock some priority projects off the table," he said. "There are still enough people out there who say CEMA is valuable."

Direct Link: http://www.fortmcmurraytoday.com/2015/04/22/funding-problems-puts-cema-future-at-risk

Land Claims & Treaty Rights

Tataskweyak Cree Nation chief says no talks about highway since November

Molly Gibson Kirby / Thompson Citizen
April 17, 2015 12:00 AM

As summer weather creeps closer in Northern Manitoba, Chief Duke Beardy of Tataskweyak Cree Nation (TCN) has written the provincial government about worsening conditions on PR 280. In the letter, written on April 10, Beardy says because of additional traffic, heavy machinery and transport trucks on the highway connecting Split

Lake and Gillam to Thompson, resulting from the construction of the Keeyask Generating Station project, the conditions are not safe. “Our members drive this highway on a daily basis and have long-held concerns about the unsafe driving conditions. Many of our members have firsthand experience with the result of these conditions, be it through damage to their vehicles or, in the worst cases, personal tragedy.”

In a recent poll by CAA, PR 280 occupied top spot midway through voting as the worst road in the province, and Beardy says now that it’s spring, the ruts in the roads are growing.

Beardy wrote to Premier Greg Selinger, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak Grand Chief David Harper, Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Eric Robinson and MLA Steve Ashton as well as different chiefs throughout the province.

The hope is to start a conversation about the road, and what needs to happen to make Manitobans who use the highway feel safer.

Beardy told the *Nickel Belt News* he’s saddened by the lack of communication the provincial government has with TCN. “TCN leadership is disheartened by the lack of progress made by the group that was establish to plan and implement upgrades on PR 280,” he wrote in the letter. “Since a new TCN Chief and Council were elected in November 2014, there has been no contact from Manitoba officials to indicate progress or to meet with community leaders.” Beardy says this needs to change.

The letter finished with a plea to officials. “I am urgently requesting that you take immediate action to begin to address these conditions so that the members of my community have access to the same quality of roads found in the rest of the province.

The *Nickel Belt News* contacted the premier’s office and Robinson for comment, but had not heard back from them at press time.

- See more at: http://www.thompsoncitizen.net/news/nickel-belt/tataskweyak-cree-nation-chief-says-no-talks-about-highway-since-november-1.1826470#sthash.NU98PsvX.dpuf

First Nations Clash With Enbridge Over Northern Gateway

5:39 pm EST Apr 19, 2015
By Alistair MacDonald and Paul Vieira

Indigenous communities in Canada are fighting Enbridge Inc.’s plans to build Northern Gateway, a 730-mile pipeline to ship Canadian oil to a West Coast port for export to Asia. The company, Ottawa and oil producers see the pipeline as key to helping the

country lessen its almost total dependence on U.S. demand for oil. But the aboriginal groups say the environmental and cultural risks are too great.

- **What's at stake?**

 Canada, which is also contending with delays to another, better known pipeline, TransCanada Corp.'s Keystone XL, which would carry oil south across the U.S. to the Gulf Coast, has pledged to sell more oil outside the U.S. market, where surging supply means Canadian oil trades at a discount. And as a series of fiery oil-train derailments has brought scrutiny and tougher regulations on rail shipments, oil sands producers and policy makers have made finishing the Gateway pipeline a priority.

- **What's the legal landscape?**

 By law, native groups must be consulted prior to proposed resource development to try to accommodate their concerns, but around half the 50 First Nations along the route have yet to back the pipeline, according to the company. Centuries of thorny legal issues surrounding aboriginal land rights became more complex in June, when a ruling from Canada's top court gave natives new leverage over companies operating on their traditional lands. Aboriginal groups have filed seven separate lawsuits in the Federal Court of Appeal that aim to stop the pipeline.

- **Why do the native groups oppose the project?**

 For many indigenous people, who see themselves as custodians of the land, the pipeline represents a threat to their way of life. In the Tl'azt'en First Nation, for example, many blame the last major piece of infrastructure—a road built in the late 1960s that connects them to a local highway and ended centuries of relative isolation—for bringing drugs, alcohol and welfare, underscoring a long-rooted mistrust of what they see as "encroaching Canada." They also point to a British Columbia copper mine that recently spilled more than a billion gallons of waste material, including arsenic, into waterways as an example of the environmental risks of resource development.

- **Are other resource projects affected?**

 Native and environmental protesters have thrown into doubt an expansion of Kinder Morgan Inc.'s Trans Mountain Pipeline outside of Vancouver, and object to a proposed TransCanada pipeline that would ship crude from Alberta to Atlantic Canada. Last fall, McEwen Mining Inc. pulled out of exploring for gold in northern Ontario after local First Nations demanded consultation and a confidential agreement on giving them a share of any find, the company said. And in December, the government of New Brunswick introduced a moratorium on hydraulic fracturing for oil and gas after months of protests from aboriginal groups.

Direct Link: http://blogs.wsj.com/briefly/2015/04/19/first-nations-clash-with-enbridge-over-northern-gateway-the-short-answer/

Aboriginals benefit from consulting with Ottawa, Christmas says

TOM AYERS CAPE BRETON BUREAU
Published April 20, 2015 - 9:32pm

SYDNEY — Aboriginal people are gaining benefits from the federal government's constitutional duty to consult over development, says Bernd Christmas.

"Generally speaking, I would say the law is … pretty standard now," Christmas said.

"The Supreme Court has come out with a lot of court cases that kind of fleshed it out and made it a little bit stronger, and the basic part of it is that the government, or the designated company or proponent, has to consult in what they call a fair and good-faith manner.

"You have to keep in mind that it doesn't give the indigenous group veto power … over whether the project is going to go or to not go, but it gives them the ability to see the project doesn't affect certain rights or title."

Under the process, the government and corporations are not legally required to make any kind of financial or other accommodation, said Christmas, who was the first Mi'kmaq to become a lawyer and specializes in aboriginal law.

"In legal terms, there's no requirement for economic accommodation, but in practical terms, it seems to happen on almost every case that I've come across."

According to Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, the federal government has a long-established constitutional duty to consult aboriginal people on government policy and development, and it holds up the tripartite consultation process developed by the Mi'kmaq, Nova Scotia and the federal government as an example for others.

Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn, also known as the Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative, signed an aboriginal consultation agreement with the province in 2012, making Nova Scotia the first province to do so under federal law.

Christmas said the duty to consult has to vary across the country, taking into account differences in the relationship between the federal government and aboriginal bands. He said the Mi'kmaq have longstanding treaties with Canada that do not cede any land, differing from First Nations in Western Canada that have specific land claims.

In Nova Scotia, the Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative says it is working on more than 100 consultations, including talks over the Bear Head liquefied natural gas proposal in Point Tupper and the development of Sydney Harbour.

Christmas said the federal duty to consult aboriginal people is broad.

"Whether it's the Maritime Link, or Bear Head, or any of the gold stuff that's happening in Goldboro or Goldenville area, or anywhere where there's going to be infrastructure — the twinning of the highways, any new road work — that all has to have some kind of consultation with the Mi'kmaq.

"It's pretty significant. Kudos to Canada and the province of Nova Scotia for recognizing that. There's been some hiccups along the way, but at least there's a way to move forward where everyone can work together."

Direct Link: http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/1281738-aboriginals-benefit-from-consulting-with-ottawa-christmas-says

No money in federal budget to improve consultation with First Nations on natural resource development

National News | April 21, 2015 by Jorge Barrera



Jorge Barrera
APTN National News
It is one of the biggest irritants between First Nations and Ottawa and the subject of two reports issued by a special federal representative appointed by both Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt, but it is barely mentioned in the federal budget tabled Tuesday.

The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled on it repeatedly. First Nations, the provinces and industry have repeatedly called on Ottawa to meet its responsibility on the issue. But in Budget 2015-2016 consultation with First Nations on resource development projects gets a mere passing mention, folded into a $35 million measure, over five years, to boost the Environment Assessment Agency's approval process.

The money, however, is not specific to consultation with First Nations, which is a Constitutional requirement solidified by successive high court rulings. The money will "allow the agency to consult with Canadians, including Aboriginal peoples, enabling them to participate in the environmental assessment of projects."

The budget also provides more funding to the National Energy Board–$80 million over five years–to enhance its "engagement with Canadians" on pipelines like TransCanada's proposed Energy East project.

No mention is made of anything specifically targeting consultation with First Nations through whose lands projects like Energy East will traverse.

The federal budget also discusses Ontario's Ring of Fire major chromite deposits and the country's rare earth element deposits, one of which is in the territories of the Wolf Lake and Eagle Village First Nations.

The budget document mentions Ottawa has invested in improving "Aboriginal capacity" in the Ring of Fire but remains silent on the issue of consultation.

The budget also invests $86 million over two years to help the forestry industry "innovate" and find new international markets. Again, no mention is made of consultation with First Nation communities, many of which have physically prevented logging on their territories over the lack of consultation.

Yet, in last year's budget, it seemed the federal government was ready to fully deal with the issue. That budget said Ottawa would be responding to recommendations from former federal negotiator Doug Eyford who was appointed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper to talk with First Nation communities in Alberta and British Columbia on the issue of consultation and energy projects. Eyford issued a report recommending ways for Ottawa to build trust, foster inclusion and reconciliation with First Nations to help pave the way for energy developments.

Last summer, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt turned to Eyford to again engage with First Nations on comprehensive land claims, or modern treaties, which is the overarching issue behind the thorny matter of consultation.

Eyford delivered his report to Valcourt in February and made several recommendations to improve the modern treaty process, which involves First Nations not covered by so-called surrendered treaties like the numbered treaties signed in parts of Ontario, the prairies, and sections of the North along with a small slice of British Columbia.

Among the recommendations made by Eyford was a call for Ottawa to develop a reconciliation framework with First Nations. Valcourt's office responded with a statement saying it planned to launch an engagement process to develop the framework.

No mention is made of Eyford's reports or any money directed at improving consultation with First Nations.

If one is to divine a government's mind by following the money, it would seem the Harper government is more interested in ensuring First Nation communities provide labour-force muscle for the natural resource sector than with dealing with consultation or modern treaties. First Nation leaders say consultation and accommodation is necessary for Indigenous nations to finally benefit from the wealth that has powered Canada's economy throughout its 148 year existence.

The 2015-2016 budget includes a $215 million investment over five years for "Aboriginal labour market programming." In addition, the budget puts $33.5 million of the same time span for "Administrative support" for the program and an on-reserve pilot labour force survey to "improve available labour market information."

Direct Link: http://aptn.ca/news/2015/04/21/45404/

Dehcho First Nations and N.W.T. resume land claim, self-government talks

Negotiations resumed Tuesday after negotiations had broken down for months

CBC News Posted: Apr 22, 2015 9:36 AM CT Last Updated: Apr 22, 2015 9:36 AM CT

There was a warming of relations between Dehcho First Nations and the N.W.T. government Tuesday as the two groups went back to the table for land claim and self-government negotiations.

Talks between the two had broken down for months.

The last-ditch attempt to re-start negotiations did not begin well, according to Dehcho Grand Chief Herb Norwegian.

"It was almost like a political bloodbath in the boardroom there," he said.



Dehcho Grand Chief Herb Norwegian: 'If we can actually get an agreement between now and late June, early July sometime, we would be complete in the really hard labour kind of negotiations on the Dehcho AIP.' (CBC)

Norwegian said the tone changed completely after the lunch break. He would not say how the impasse on land is going to be resolved, but seemed optimistic that it could be.

"If we can actually get an agreement between now and late June, early July sometime, we would be complete in the really hard labour kind of negotiations on the Dehcho [agreement in principle]."

The Dehcho First Nations, whose traditional territory is centred in the southwest of the N.W.T., are asking for control of about 50,000 square kilometres of land in their land claim negotiations, including both surface and subsurface rights. The territorial government took over negotiations with the Dehcho from the federal government after devolution.

The talks came to a standstill months ago, after the territorial government suggested in a January letter that the sides should agree negotiations have failed if the N.W.T.'s final offer on land is not accepted.

In a letter to the premier earlier this month, Dene National Chief Bill Erasmus said that approach has no place in negotiations with First Nations.

"That's not the way they're supposed to conduct negotiations according to the parameters the Supreme Court has set out when you're talking treaties with First Nations entities in this country."

Norwegian says he expects substantive negotiations to resume next month.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/dehcho-first-nations-and-n-w-t-resume-land-claim-self-government-talks-1.3043813

First Nation signs agreement around gas pipeline

By Staff The Canadian Press, April 23, 2015 5:28 pm



Lelu Island, near Prince Rupert, BC, is seen March 8, 2013.

TERRACE, B.C. – The company planning to build a 900 kilometre natural gas pipeline across northern B.C. has signed a benefit agreement with the Kitselas First Nation.

TransCanada (TSX:TRP) announced the deal, when signed, will provide financial and other benefits related to the Prince Rupert Gas Transmission project.

Project president Dean Patry says the agreement is an important milestone and reflects his firm's commitment to engage with First Nations.

Kitselas Chief Joe Bevan says it gives his members economic benefits and employment training and also ensures environmental concerns have been adequately addressed.

TransCanada has signed similar agreements with the Nisga'a and Gitanyow First Nations.

The pipeline, which has yet to receive regulator approval, would deliver natural gas from near Hudson's Hope in northeastern B.C. to the proposed Pacific Northwest LNG facility at Lelu Island, off the coast near Prince Rupert.

Direct Link: http://globalnews.ca/news/1957219/first-nation-signs-agreement-around-gas-pipeline/

Misunderstanding leads to First Nation opposition to Property Ownership Act

First Nations, Canada have more in common when it comes to property rights than first thought

Joseph Quesnel , Troy Media / Battlefords News-Optimist
April 23, 2015 01:28 PM



BAYFIELD, N.S. — Opposition to the federal government's plan to transfer title to reserve lands from the Crown to a First Nation government may be based on a misunderstanding of how property rights actually work in Canada.

Under the proposed First Nations Property Ownership Act (FNPOA), once land title is transferred to a First Nation government that government would have the right to grant property rights to individual reserve residents.

But First Nation and academic critics contend that the legislation is contrary to Indigenous understandings about land and should therefore be opposed on those (as well as other) grounds.

First Nations critics argue individual property rights are Eurocentric and originate in societies where the individual has all the rights. According to one Indigenous website called First Nations in British Columbia, "The courts have said aboriginal rights belongs to the collective Nation and not to the individual members. The right to land is no different and collective rights to lands is one First Nations understand."

While Aboriginal peoples maintain a strong connection to the land, one that should not be discounted, the question is: can these Indigenous beliefs about land be reconciled with Euro-Canadian conceptions of property?

To answer that question, we must first understand what the common law really says about land.

For instance, is land ownership as ultra-individualistic as some critics assume? While the common law says that individual subjects of the Crown have broad rights to own, use and enjoy property, these rights to private land are ultimately granted by the Crown.

In systems derived from English common law (such as Canada), the Crown is theoretically the ultimate "owner" of all land. By statute or common law, the government has wide powers over land including taxation, expropriation, powers of police, and

escheat (the power to transfer land to the state after death when there is no clear heir) So individual rights in our land ownership system are limited and not absolute.

To look at it another way, if the Crown is ultimate owner then there is an element of theoretical collective rights in our system. Contrary to belief, it is not just about the individual.

Fee simple estate - which means that an individual has the freedom to dispose of, mortgage, or place his land as security at will - may be the highest ownership interest possible in our system but it is limited by the Crown's prerogatives: the collective power of the government over land is always there.
Through the power of expropriation, governments can forcibly confiscate (but with rights to compensation) property for public purposes. However, the definition of public purposes has, over time, widened to include many more grounds for expropriation. This means that a collective (read: governmental) element remains in force in our land system.

Just as in the Indigenous conception of land, the Euro-Canadian conception involves a complicated dance between the individual and the collective (or government). Both parties have roles and responsibilities. It can therefore be persuasively argued that there is room for common dialogue between Indigenous peoples and common law societies about property ownership.

Furthermore, both societies recognize the need to protect the environment, a priority for Indigenous peoples. In fact, the government has, under the common law, the power to regulate the natural environment in favourable ways.

The proposed FNPOA would create strong First Nation governments, with collective powers to control land, level taxation, expropriate for public purposes and of escheatment. First Nation governments would also have powers to designate public lands, just like any government.

Before Indigenous critics reject individual property rights, they ought to seriously question if they have a fair understanding of those rights to begin with.

Troy Media columnist Joseph Quesnel is an Aboriginal policy analyst. He writes about Aboriginal policy, property rights, and water market issues and resides in Bayfield, Nova Scotia.

- See more at: http://www.newsoptimist.ca/opinion/columnists/misunderstanding-leads-to-first-nation-opposition-to-property-ownership-act-1.1847346#sthash.UpXOz9ca.dpuf

Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

Walking for Truth and Reconciliation

Friday, April 17, 2015 3:28:57 EDT PM



People from Treaty 9 First Nations are walking to Ottawa for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission presentation at the end of the month. Shown abopve are some of the walkers, Pat Eherington Sr., front left, Frances Whiskeychan. back left, Pat Etherington Jr., Darren Hughie, Remi Nakogee, Pascal Koostachin and John Edwards.

KIRKLAND LAKE - The road from Cochrane to Ottawa is a long one, but it just part of the road to Truth and Reconciliation that First Nations in Canada are taking part in.

A group of First Nations people from Treaty 9 Mushkegowuk area are walking from Cochrane to Ottawa to bring awareness to the damage Indian Residential Schools, did to their culture, their families, to individuals and their way of life. While that is the main objective of the walk, the Treaty 9 group is dedicating the next five days of the walk to missing and dead aboriginal women, and will be thinking of them and directing their energy to this issue as they make their way down the road.

Treaty 9 area covers the far north in the western part of James Bay, and a number of First Nation Bands are included in the treaty and the walk.

While in Kirkland Lake, the walkers stayed two nights at Trinity United Church and members of the congregation provided them with a hot meal, as well as assisting them in any way they could.

Friday Morning the walkers took to the road again, heading toward Englehart. They have a goal of walking about 30 kilometres a day and plan on arriving in Ottawa in time for the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission's final event being held May 31 to June 3.

First Nations Elder and Walk Co-ordinator Patrick Etherington said, Indian Residential Schools affect a lot of Native Communities and they want to bring the issue of Indian Residential Schools to everyone's attention. They also want to bring awareness of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work, to the public's attention.

“We want to educate the public in Canada about the impact of Indian Residential Schools and how truth and reconciliation can be visited through dialogue. We want to begin an avenue of recognition towards our recognition, as people that have humanity,” said Etherington.

He continued that they have association and communication with the United Church of Canada and that is where the support is coming from in the communities they pass by. As well they have reached out and communicated to receive support.

Etherington said, as the walk continues they are working in their tradition ceremonial values and that is why they are including missing and dead aboriginal women in their thoughts as they continue their journey to Ottawa. He said that they don't know how many missing aboriginal women there are, but they are putting their heartfelt energy into this issue.

After concentrating on this issue Etherington said, “we will continue onto other issues that have affected our people in connection to the Indian Residential Schools issue - again, and again. We are in the process of starting a dialogue.”

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has a mandate to inform all Canadians about what happened in Indian Residential Schools. Indian Residential Schools had students from First Nations, Inuit and Metis and date back to the 1870s. There were more than 130 residential schools in Canada and the last school closed in 1996.

The Indian Residential Schools were government funded and church run, and were set up to eliminate parental involvement in the intellectual, cultural, and spiritual development of Aboriginal children.

History shows that 150,00 First Nations, Metis and Inuit children were placed in the schools and often it was against their parents' wishes. At many of the schools the children were not allowed to speak their language and practice their culture. It is estimate that there are about 80,000 former Indian Residential School student alive today.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission mandates includes finding out the truth about what happened at these schools and then informing Canada.

The Commission hopes to guide and encourage First Nations, Inuit, and Metis and Canadians in a process of healing. This is to lead to reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect.

Direct Link: http://www.northernnews.ca/2015/04/17/walking-for-truth-and-reconciliation

Sister Warriors fight for victims

St. Albert woman spreads awareness about missing and murdered indigenous women

Saturday, Apr 18, 2015 06:00 am

By: Viola Pruss



RAISING AWARENESS - Brittany Badrock, left, and Lisa Bojanowski are part of a group called Social Media Intervention, which raises awareness about missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada through social media.

Brittany Badrock grew up thinking nobody cared about her mother's missing cousin because she was a Cree. The young woman, 20, just vanished one day. Police expected she ran away.

They did not bother looking for her, says Badrock. But they did find her remains. Her mother's cousin was one of many, often aboriginal women, whose bones and bodies were discovered at a Port Coquitlam pig farm in British Columbia. She was murdered by one of Canada' most notorious serial killers, Robert Pickton.

Badrock, now also in her early 20s, never met her mother's cousin. But she grew up with her family's despair over the disappearance.

"People victimized her," she says. "Nobody cared that she went missing or bothered looking. It was very depressing, some family members turned to alcohol."

Badrock, a second year student at the University of Alberta and a resident of St. Albert, is now fighting back – against discrimination and the government's apathy in looking into the cases of 1,200 aboriginal women missing and murdered in Canada.

With four other students at the U of A, she formed a group, the Sister Warriors Against Violence. Using social media, the women want to bring attention to the grim statistics that haunt aboriginal families in Canada.

Aboriginal people are only four per cent of the population yet victim of 25 per cent of statistical violence, she says. An RCMP record also indicated that aboriginal women are over-represented among Canada's murdered and missing women.

“It’s a Canadian issue. Everybody should receive the same justice,” she says. “By me helping educate I hope that more people will realize they should care.”

Many Canadians don’t care about the danger aboriginal women face in this country because they are disconnected from that segment of the population, says Alannah Mandamin-Shawanda, another Sister Warrior. They accept stereotypes, which often stem from an era of colonialism, she says.

Earlier this year, she led a memorial march for the missing women through the university. There were many positive faces in the crowd, she says. But there were also some who did not like what they saw. A few days later, toilet paper was wrapped around the teepee outside her classroom.

That’s why they need to create awareness around aboriginal issues and fight discrimination, says Mandamin-Shawanda. “Because there are still so many people who just don’t know or who are very ignorant.”

The Sister Warriors want to attach names and faces to the statistics of those who have gone missing. They want the government to investigate the cases of the missing and murdered women. And they hope to create alliances with people across Canada because they need people of all backgrounds to reach their goal.

They want to humanize aboriginal people, they say.

“These are human beings, these are girls who had a purpose in life and it was cut short,” says Mandamin-Shawanda. “These are your lands, your home lands. If you are aware of the issues that are here you should address them.”

To find out more visit their website sisterwarriors.wix.com/against-violence.

Direct Link: http://www.stalbertgazette.com/article/20150418/SAG0801/304189989/-1/sag0801

It’s not just indigenous women: Indigenous men more likely to be murdered than anyone else in Canada

Jeremy Warren, Postmedia News | April 18, 2015 5:05 PM ET



Michelle Berg/StarPhoenixGrace Lafond-Barr speaks about her son Jaron who was murdered in Saskatoon.

SASKATOON — Grace Lafond-Barr believes healing starts in the home, so she moved her family to Muskeg Lake Cree Nation from Saskatoon two years ago to escape the city where murder took away her two brothers and a son.

She hopes the distance between the city and her grandkids will mean a quieter life without the spectre of violence and vice following them as they grow into young men. Lafond-Barr has seen enough of that: in 2002, her 36-year-old brother was stabbed to death; in 2011, a 15-year-old boy shot and killed her 28-year-old son; her 35-year-old halfbrother was fatally stabbed in front of their elderly father in November 2014. "It's a heartache I don't wish on anyone at all. In a lot of ways, we've failed our children because we're not the parents we're supposed to be," Lafond-Barr said in a recent interview at her home on the reserve north of Blaine Lake.

"We just keep on forgetting how to heal — quit the drugs, quit the gangs. Sometimes I feel powerless because every day you're reminded of a girl missing or a guy missing."



Michelle Berg / The StarPhoenix

Lafond-Barr, 55, has lived the heartache while working as an addictions and family counsellor for others struggling to do the same. She and people such as Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde say Canada is failing its indigenous communities by seeing men as mere perpetrators while not considering how a colonial legacy and systemic racism make them just as vulnerable to violence as indigenous women.

For many, the violence caused and experienced by indigenous men is a taboo subject.

“Communities have to start talking about the abuses: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual,” Bellegarde said in a recent phone interview. “Those are learned behaviours and intergenerational effects of the residential schools. The whole system of being a healthy family has broken down. People have been guilted and shamed. People don’t want to talk about it.”

Said Lafond-Barr, “We still make it tough for men to feel something or admit they feel something.

“They’ve had abuse in their life, too, but big boys don’t cry, eh? My 95-year-old dad still hasn’t put his arms around me and said, ‘I love you, Grace.’ ” Indigenous people in Canada are three times as likely to be victims of crime compared to non-indigenous people and the homicide rate for indigenous people is seven times that of non-aboriginal people – 8.8 compared to 1.3 victims per 100,000 people, according to Statistics Canada.

We still make it tough for men to feel something or admit they feel something

RCMP say 1,017 indigenous women were murdered between 1980 and 2012; a recently published article in Aboriginal Policy Studies suggested the number of murdered indigenous men in that period could be more than 2,000.

According to statistics prepared by the RCMP for the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police, Saskatchewan had 123 unsolved missing persons cases between 1940 and late 2014. Thirty-eight of the 90 missing men and 18 of the 33 missing women are of aboriginal descent.

Some people suggest including the victimization of indigenous men in a national inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women for a more holistic approach to combating family violence and sexual abuse. “There should be a national inquiry focused on murdered and missing indigenous people,” said Michele Audette, former president of the Native Women’s Association of Canada, in a phone interview.

“If there is action or we do a strategy for this sad reality of women, then we also have to think about the men and boys who are missing or killed … We have to address the entire community to make sure the approach is appropriate for aboriginal women and men and for mainstream society to say, ‘Can you be part of breaking that cycle?’” Audette said indigenous men and women face different problems – women are more at risk for human trafficking and domestic abuse – as do people on reserves and in urban centres, so Canada needs a comprehensive strategy for programs such as family violence education and sexual abuse prevention.

Chief Felix Thomas of the Saskatoon Tribal Council, which represents seven Saskatchewan First Nations, has long supported an inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women. He said the victimization of men should be somehow included in that

inquiry. “I’m not going to say we need a specific inquiry for men, but it is a serious issue,” Thomas said in an interview.

“An aboriginal person is more likely to be murdered or go missing and that’s a shame in a country like Canada … I think we have to look at society in general and why it is that there is disparity with aboriginal people being victims.”

Lafond-Barr said people need to understand that generations of indigenous people have struggled to learn how to parent because of a residential school system that painfully and violently tore families apart.

“A lot of people are so traumatized; they can’t work, they can’t parent, they can’t see through life … My kids went through the same thing,” she said.



Michelle Berg / The StarPhoenixGrace Lafond-Barr keeps her son Jaron's clothing that he was wearing the night he was shot and murdered in Saskatoon.

As a teen mother raised in a residential school and struggling with addictions, Lafond-Barr lost custody of her first two kids. In the early 1990s, she said she was arrested after taking a gun and threatening people she believed were abusing her children. It was while awaiting her legal fate in Pine Grove Correctional Centre that she decided to get sober and figure out how to help others.

“It starts at the grassroots — healing each other, accepting each other,” Lafond-Barr said. “It just takes one person to change another person. Never give up. If society just gives up, what the hell will happen to the rest of us?” In 2002 her brother Elroy Lafond bled to death from stab wounds inside the Saskatoon apartment he shared with the man later convicted of manslaughter in his death. Lafond-Barr said Elroy — the youngest of eight siblings — struggled with alcoholism. He was once implicated in the beating death of a man in 1996, but charges were later stayed.

Her son Jaron Tyler Jahnke, also known as Jaron Lafond, was shot in the stomach with a sawed-off .22-calibre rifle and died in hospital in July 2011. An altercation in his Saskatoon neighbourhood earlier that day and a case of mistaken identity led to his confrontation with a 15-year-old boy who shot him.

Jaron was raised by an adoptive family, but had remained close to his mother and often visited his nephews, who were living with her. He had plans to be a graphic designer. Jaron, whose older brother was a longtime gang member, resisted attempts to recruit him into street gangs that also tried extorting him for protection money, Lafond-Barr said.

“He was a good son. He just wanted to escape the lifestyle surrounding him,” she said, adding she still has the clothes he was wearing the night he died. “We were supposed to have a ceremony to burn his stuff, but I can’t do it.”



Michelle Berg/The StarPhoenixGrace Lafond-Barr speaks about her son Jaron.

In November, four men burst into the apartment her half-brother Jonathon Keenatch-Lafond shared with their 95-year-old father. They were gang members who assaulted Keenatch-Lafond before one fatally stabbed him in front of their dad, Lafond-Barr said. Saskatoon police say the attack was a targeted killing; the case remains unsolved.

“We had warned Jonathon a year before to quit doing what he was doing. Young men think they’re invincible,” Lafond-Barr said.

She and her partner of 15 years are now raising four grandsons away from the city, hoping to break the cycle of violence that traps too many indigenous men.

The murders and endless stories of other slain and missing indigenous people caused her to question the utility of the social work she does, but she eventually emerged more confident she can help others by passing on her hard-won knowledge.

“If I stopped having hope, I think I’d be dead, too,” Lafond-Barr said of her religious faith.

“There must be something a lot more stronger out there. No matter what the struggle is, something good has to come of it.”

To focus solely on indigenous men as murderers ignores a larger story about violence and Canada's colonial legacy.

A University of Saskatchewan researcher says RCMP statistics showing indigenous men are responsible for 70 per cent of homicides involving indigenous women fail to address the dire situation of missing and murdered indigenous people. "It's easy to view native men as victimizers. Why? Because white people are already afraid of them," said Native Studies assistant professor Robert Innes.

"If you fear someone, you're going to have a hard time empathizing with them as a victim. You might even have a hard time believing it."

In a commentary published in the Aboriginal Policy Studies journal, Innes writes that murdered indigenous men could surpass 2,000 victims in the same 30-year period in which 1,017 indigenous women were murdered. The article explores how race, gender and a history of colonization can explain the over-representation of indigenous men as both victims and perpetrators of violence.

"Although far from definitive, the data shows that indigenous men are much more likely to commit, to be charged with, and die as a result of murder than anyone else in Canada," Innes wrote in the journal article, noting there is little discussion about indigenous men as victims of violence.

"Placing the emphasis on the violence of which indigenous men are capable while at the same time ignoring their victimization is caused by a specific kind of race and gender bias many white people have toward indigenous men."



Justin Tang "Communities have to start talking about the abuses: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual," says Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde, seen in this Feb. 9, 2015 photo in Ottawa.

Statistics Canada data indicates 1,750 indigenous men and 745 indigenous women were murdered between 1980 and 2012, Innes said. The RCMP report into missing and murdered indigenous women put the number of victims at 1,017 and acknowledged the Statistics Canada data might not be complete, so Innes suggests the number of murdered indigenous men might be much higher than 1,750.

“It’s a difficult issue to raise because you don’t want to say one is more important than the other and it can come across like that,” said Innes, a member of the Cowessess First Nation. “When you raise it, you want to make it clear it’s an issue facing men and women.” Violence against indigenous men and women is a shared history, said Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde in an interview.

“The issue really is ending violence in our communities, male and female,” Bellegarde said.

“Why is it happening? You can go back and look at the imposition of residential schools, the imposition of the Indian Act, the poverty our people face … lack of good education, overcrowded housing conditions. It’s almost a lack of hope. It’s almost that violence has become such an everyday occurrence that it’s become normalized. We have to start changing, not only as First Nations people but as society in Canada as a whole.”



The cause of missing and murdered indigenous women has caught the public's attention, but indigenous men are just as vulnerable in Canada.

Bellegarde said more needs to be done to get First Nations people into policing and employed in the legal system. He also wants to see Canada establish a comprehensive alternative justice system, incorporating more sentencing and healing circles while opening more wellness centres focused on families.

“There’s a huge cost to keeping a First Nations person in jail, to keeping a First Nations person on welfare, a huge cost to continued overcrowded housing conditions. We have to look at alternatives. It’s in the best interest of everybody,” Bellegarde said.

“On a bigger picture, we should develop a First Nations justice system based on our laws, our principles, our cultural practices, our languages, our traditions and ceremonies.” Jen Mt. Pleasant is a Wilfrid Laurier graduate student researching missing and murdered indigenous people with a recent focus on men, which includes a victims database with about 800 entries she’s compiled on her own through media and police reports.

“We know what the numbers are for women, but nobody really knows the number for men because nobody is really keeping track,” said Mt. Pleasant, a member of the Tuscarora Nation of the Six Nations Reserve in Ontario, in a phone interview.

If a national inquiry happens, it should look at the men and women together because of the shared colonial history, Mt. Pleasant said. But there are differences.

“For women, it’s 360 degrees – wherever they go, they’re vulnerable to being victimized. In their homes or in their communities or if they move to the city, they’re met with just as much violence,” she said. “With men, it’s different. A lot of it is nativeon-native crime. There are a lot of gangs, especially in the western provinces.”

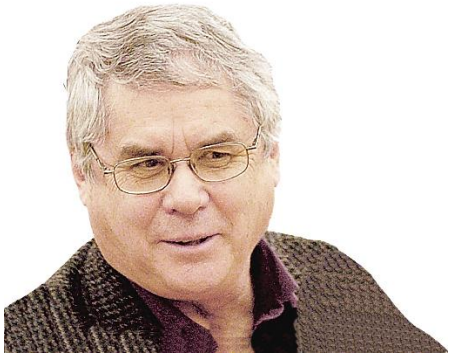
Without the hard work so many people put into bringing attention to murdered and missing indigenous women, nobody would be talking about men, Innes said.

“Nobody was talking about murdered and missing indigenous women. That movement didn’t just happen. It was a lot of work hammering away at it.”

Direct Link: http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/indigenous-men-are-more-likely-to-be-murdered-than-anyone-else-in-canada-745122

Cuthand: Valcourt using statistics as diversionary tactic

By Doug Cuthand, The Starphoenix April 17, 2015


Doug Cuthand

Aboriginal Minister Bernard Valcourt has a terrible relationship with his client group.

He continues to appear as an angry politician who resents his job, and it is revealed in his disrespect and confrontational attitude when dealing with First Nations leaders. His reaction to calls for an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women has been negative and bellicose.

When some Alberta chiefs questioned Valcourt about missing and murdered aboriginal women, the minister was defensive and made the accusation that 70 per cent of aboriginal women were killed by an aboriginal person. He referenced the RCMP but stated that this information had not been made public, so the chiefs were caught flat-footed.

The RCMP had said it hesitated to make the information public because of its preference for "bias-free policing." The national police service also based its conclusions on information obtained from about 300 law enforcement agencies and couldn't confirm the accuracy of each report.

However, Valcourt was under pressure to resign and the heat was on. So RCMP Commissioner Bo Paulsen had to come forward and state that, yes, 70 per cent of homicides against aboriginal women were perpetrated by aboriginal men. That's the government's line these days: The Indians did it to themselves, and it's case closed. "Move along folks, there's nothing to see here."

But you can't take statistical information and examine it in a vacuum. To use Prime Minister Stephen Harper's disparaging remark, you must "commit sociology."

First of all, the police information is based on solved murders. If the perpetrator of a murder isn't arrested, obviously the police can't guess who did it and include that in the statistics.

Police will also point out that domestic crimes are relatively easy to solve. They are considered the low-hanging fruit of homicides. An anonymous serial killer or a death of someone on a lonely highway are far more difficult to solve, and these deaths are more likely committed by persons unknown to the victim.

Also, while 70 per cent of aboriginal women are murdered by a spouse, partner of family member, the corresponding figure is 75 per cent for the non-aboriginal population. So, both groups are facing similar circumstances.

This situation has been an issue of concern for aboriginal organizations for years. Spousal violence has been the subject of workshops and counselling to the point that RCMP statistics revealed that the rate of fatal violence directed at aboriginal women is on the decline. This, of course, was a statistic that Valcourt failed to reveal.

I can't recall instances of women's organizations and advocacy groups dismissing lateral violence. Instead, they speak out against it. I have never heard any of the advocates for an inquiry lay all the blame at the foot of outsiders and ignore the serious problem we face with lateral violence. This is an issue that advocacy groups maintain must be a part of an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Valcourt's comments reflect his ignorance of the First Nations community, and his lack of knowledge of our history with addressing issues such as lateral violence. He is

obviously taking advice from Aboriginal Affairs officials who view First Nations people as adversaries.

If the minister and others would take a serious look at this issue, they would realize that lateral violence is a sociological phenomenon of marginalized peoples throughout the world. High rates of lateral violence exist in communities of aboriginal people in Australia, New Zealand and throughout the Americas. Other groups such as African-Americans and Hispanics, too, experience high crime rates related to violence.

These groups all experience stress caused by overcrowding, poverty, poor health and addictions, which all contribute to domestic violence and homicide.

Meanwhile, Canada's federal government has cut back on education, health care and social services funding, which is creating serious shortfalls in First Nations communities.

The real question that must be asked is: Why is the Conservative government so obsessed with avoiding this issue to the point that it will attack the credibility of the very people who are the most vulnerable? This government seems to have drawn a line in the sand and declared war against First Nations people. Otherwise how do we explain the negative responses that constantly emanate from the minister's office. Is it its practice to be confrontational on everything? Is it all politics, all the time? Is it the Conservatives' philosophy that they must win at any cost? In spite of the statistics cited by the RCMP, it remains a fact that the pain and lack of closure of missing and murdered aboriginal women are issues that won't go away. The awareness and calls for an inquiry continue to build, and Canada has a black eye on the international stage because of its ongoing poor treatment of aboriginal people.

Nineteenth century British prime minister Benjamin Disraeli once pointed out that there were three kinds of lies: lies, damn lies and statistics. Valcourt should take it to heart and not use statistics in isolation to support his government's dubious position on murdered and missing aboriginal women.

Direct Link:
http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Cuthand+Valcourt+using+statistics+diversionary+tactic/10979801/story.html

Missing and murdered indigenous women a topic on many students' minds

Students eager to do their part to end the silence

By Otiena Ellwand, Edmonton Journal April 21, 2015

EDMONTON - The issue of missing and murdered indigenous women is not a topic isolated to adult conversations.

Amanda Gould, a First Nations, Métis and Inuit liaison at Queen Elizabeth High School in north Edmonton, where about 150 of 1,200 students are indigenous, realized this after many students began asking her about what they were hearing in the news and what they could do to help. Some students even disclosed their own personal stories of how they and their families had been affected.

She and her colleague, Terry Godwaldt, director of programming with the Centre for Global Education, organized a video conference to raise awareness and start a conversation at their school and others across the country.

On Tuesday, four classrooms from their school, and schools in High Prairie, Lloydminster, Victoria and Toronto connected online to hear from a variety of speakers, including First Nations musicians Young Medicine, ask questions and share their artwork.

One of the stories that resonated most with students was Gould's. She told students how four of her girlfriends have been murdered. One of her best friends, Bella Laboucan-McLean, 25, fell 31 storeys off a condo balcony in Toronto. Police called the death "suspicious," but there have been no updates in the case.

While not classified as "high-risk" — meaning involved in a lifestyle that may put one at risk of being a victim of violent crime — Gould said she and her friends are still vulnerable simply because they're indigenous women, a reality she faces every day.

"We need to change what society thinks of us because we're no less than anyone else," she said.

After hearing Gould's story, Grade 10 student Allen Saskatchewan told the Journal he didn't leave his bedroom for a couple of days after finding out his aunt had been murdered. He was a pallbearer at her funeral, he said.

"I just felt bad for her. I felt angry. I was just confused," he whispered. "But it's happening so much and it needs to stop ... I'll try to stop it and make a better community."

Other students shared their thoughts and artwork on Twitter under the Centre for Global Education hashtag, #globlencounters (no a).

"I refuse to continue to allow being aboriginal = being in danger," Shelby Erin Randy posted.

Juliann Carrier said, “This is important to me because it’s happened in my family.”

Godwaldt said the plan is to organize a video conference on missing and murdered indigenous women every semester.

“When we have knowledge and understanding, we can work toward solutions that actually work,” he said.

Direct Link:
http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Missing+murdered+indigenous+women+topic+many+students+minds/10991771/story.html

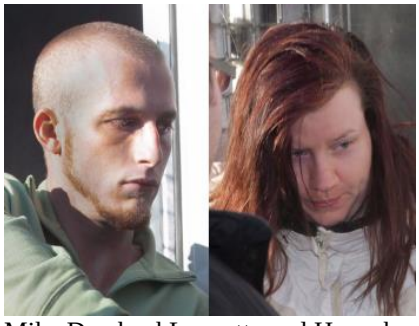
Victoria Henneberry and Blake Leggette plead guilty in murder of Inuit woman Loretta Saunders

Canadian Press | April 23, 2015 | Last Updated: Apr 23 12:43 PM ET

HALIFAX — More than a year after the remains of a young, promising Inuit university student were found beside a highway in rural New Brunswick, a couple from Halifax pleaded guilty to murder and the public learned in detail how Loretta Saunders died.

But amid the gruesome details of the 26-year-old’s death in February 2014, the motive for the slaying remains a mystery.

Blake Leggette, 25, and Victoria Henneberry, 28, were both charged with first-degree murder last year and they both pleaded not guilty at the time. As their trial was starting Wednesday, Leggette changed his plea to guilty and Henneberry pleaded guilty to a lesser charge of second-degree murder.



Mike DembeckLeggette and Henneberry are shown in Halifax on February 28, 2014.

Two statements of fact submitted to Nova Scotia Supreme Court say the couple were having “financial difficulties” soon after they moved into a sublet room in Saunders’ Halifax apartment, which they had found online through a Kijiji ad in January 2014.

The documents say the two wanted to get out of Halifax, but they don’t explain why.

“Mr. Leggette planned to kill Ms. Saunders, take her car and leave the province,” both statements say.
On Feb. 13, 2014, Saunders went to collect rent from the couple but they didn’t have the money, and Henneberry lied, saying she had lost her bank card and needed to contact her bank, according to the statement.

Leggette then grabbed Saunders by the throat and choked her, but the young woman fought back, managing to tear through the three plastic bags he pulled over her head.

At one point, Leggette and Saunders fell down. He twice hit her head on the floor and she stopped moving.

Saunders body was found in a hockey bag on the side of the Trans-Canada Highway near Salisbury, N.B., about two weeks later.

Leggette and Henneberry were arrested five days later in Harrow, Ont., while driving Saunders’ car. They also had the young woman’s phone, bank card and identification.

At a four-day preliminary hearing held last summer, the court was shown a video recorded by Leggette on Feb. 8, 2014, showing he and Henneberry arguing as they appeared to discuss killing Saunders.

Leggette will be sentenced to an automatic life sentence with no parole eligibility for 25 years.


Loretta Saunders is pictured in this undated photo.

Henneberry is also facing a life sentence, but her parole eligibility could range between 10 and 25 years.

Saunders was a student at Saint Mary's University, where she focused her studies on missing and murdered aboriginal women.

At the courtroom on Wednesday, several members of Saunders' family, including her mother, sat stone-faced throughout the proceedings.

Victim-impact statements are expected to be delivered at a sentencing hearing scheduled for next Wednesday. Judge Josh Arnold will also decide on Henneberry's parole eligibility period.

Direct Link: http://news.nationalpost.com/news/canada/victoria-henneberry-and-blake-leggette-plead-guilty-in-murder-of-inuit-woman-loretta-saunders

Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

The Invisible Men… and Women: Many Native American Attorneys Harassed

Gale Courey Toensing
4/16/15

Native American attorneys often feel invisible and that their experiences are not valid or real, according to a ground-breaking study by the National Native American Bar Association (NNABA) and the NNABA Foundation.

The Pursuit of Inclusion: An In-Depth Exploration of the Experiences and Perspectives of Native American Attorneys in the Legal Profession, released April 6, is the only comprehensive research regarding Native American attorneys across all practice settings. Its most significant finding shows that traditional diversity and inclusion efforts have failed to reach Native American attorneys, who lag behind even other underrepresented groups in terms of inclusion, retention, and representation.

"This comprehensive research . . . presents a stark portrait of an entire group of attorneys systematically excluded from the legal profession," said Mary Smith, NNABA president. "It is clear that traditional diversity and inclusion programs are simply not working for Native American attorneys. NNABA hopes that this research will be used to build a more robust pipeline of Native American attorneys, and to work toward the full inclusion of Native Americans in the legal profession."

Research highlights:

· 527 Native American attorneys, approximately 20 percent of the 2,640 Native American attorneys in the United States, provided information for the study.

· The most satisfied attorneys work in the tribal sector, and the least satisfied attorneys work for the federal/state government or law firms, but tribal politics/cliques, overwhelming workloads, and the inability to make a difference are primary sources of dissatisfaction even within the generally satisfying context.

· Over 40 percent of the attorneys experienced demeaning comments or other types of harassment based on their race, ethnicity, and/or tribal affiliation; and at least 33 percent reported experiencing one or more forms of discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, and/or tribal affiliation.

· Women were more likely than men to report demeaning comments and/or harassment based on gender (38 to 3 percent); discrimination based on gender (35 to 4 percent); denial of advancement or promotional opportunities due to gender (21% to 3%); and denial of appropriate compensation due to gender (29 to 1 percent).

Gabe Galanda, whose firm Galanda Broadman co-sponsored the report, said the landmark study would help fill the dearth of data and empirical information about Native American attorneys' experiences. "What is critical now is implementation of the report," Galanda said. "For the report to become more than just another dusty legal diversity study, hard work and dedication is now required, not only by the national tribal bar, but the mainstream bar, law schools, the legal industry, Indian Country and other stakeholders."

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/16/invisible-men-and-women-many-native-american-attorneys-harassed-160043

Baseball Is Back, and So Is a Really Big Problem for Native Americans

By Zak Cheney-Rice April 17, 2015
Like Mic on Facebook:

Baseball is back, and so is a hefty dose of good old-fashioned American racism.

At Progressive Field in Cleveland, opening day for the Cleveland Indians saw an 8-4 loss to Detroit and a boisterous protest staged by Native American activists and allies against the franchise's continued use of Chief Wahoo — the troubling piece of "red-face" minstrelsy that's served as the team mascot since 1951.

Indian Country Today Media Network reported that 150 activists, advocates and even a City Council member showed up to demonstrate April 10. "We are people, not your mascot!" some chanted. "Change the logo, change the name!"

The response from Cleveland fans was not pretty. *ICTMN* wrote:

Intoxicated fans mocked protestors [sic] at entrances to the field, making war whoops, screaming obscenities, and admonishing them to "get a job," or "go back to the reservation." After hours of drinking as game time approached many fans appeared as red faced and befuddled as the Chief Wahoo logo that adorned their clothing. A local radio station that was broadcasting in front of the stadium's main entrance loudly blared fake powwow drum music.

Your fellow Americans, ladies and gentlemen.

The team was "cognizant and sensitive to both sides of the conversation," the franchise's senior director of communications, Curtis Danburg, said in a statement. However, the team will "continue to have the Wahoo logo represented on [their] uniforms and home cap during the 2015 season" as they "[researched their] fan base to better understand their perception and stance on the logo."

That stance seems pretty clear by now. If there's one thing we've learned from the past 64 years, it's that most Cleveland fans seem completely fine with a piece of racist propaganda representing their team. That doesn't make it right.

The detrimental effect of treating Native Americans like mascots isn't just a matter of hurt feelings — its psychological toll can be devastating. Native youth already face among the highest rates of depression, substance abuse and suicide in the nation, the direct result of a history of state-sanctioned violence, endemic poverty and systemic racism. But a 2014 report from the Center for American Progress adds another dimension: The prevalence of Native mascots at schools and sports franchises promotes "lower self-esteem and mental health" among indigenous youth, and fuels "cultural biases and prejudices" among children of all backgrounds.

Cleveland's baseball team is hardly the only offender. The Atlanta Braves, Washington Redskins and Chicago Blackhawks are all professional sports franchises guilty of commodifying Native iconography for their own gain. But Cleveland fans aren't completely silent on the issue: The "de-chiefing" movement, in which fans remove the Chief Wahoo logo from their team apparel in protest, is a powerful example of how fans can show solidarity with Native protesters.

Yet little of this matters if the dissent falls on deaf ears. It's time for franchise executives to take a proactive stance on the subject and do the right thing. Native people have the same right to shield their image from defamation, ridicule and reduction to multibillion-dollar stereotypes as everyone else. In the meantime, so begins yet another season of the same tired excuses.

Direct Link: http://mic.com/articles/115748/baseball-is-back-and-so-is-a-really-big-problem-for-native-americans

Vacant Goldman's building to become Native American health center

By Michele Fiore

CREATED Apr 17, 2015 - UPDATED: Apr 17, 2015

MILWAUKEE -- An eyesore on Milwaukee's south side is about to get a facelift. The vacant Goldman's building will become a Native American health center.

Nearly eight years after this iconic department store closed, these signs will be coming down, as developers breathe new life into this old building.

They were upbeat near the corner of 9th and Historic Mitchell Street Friday afternoon.

It was for a ground breaking ceremony, Native American style.

"This is huge. I think ever since its origination there's always been a dream, a vision to improve the indian health and wellness," said Lyle Ignace, executive director of the new Gerald L. Ignace Health Center.

Later this year, construction crews will turn the old Goldman's building into a 40-thousand square foot Native American health center.

"Native Americans have been a part of the development, of the near south side and have been important constituents for a very long time," said Alderman Jose Perez.

Goldman's was a Milwaukee staple, clothing the community for over 100 years. It fell on tough times, closing in 2007.

"That's when the foreclosure crisis started. Our economic downturn, how difficult things were," said Alderman Perez.

Alderman Perez says taggers have struck the vacant building from time to time, so it'll be good to have it occupied. But, there's a lot of work to do on the first and second floors. The basement will remain unoccupied.

And on the second level, the Gerald L. Ignace Health Center will be offering cooking classes, taking aim at the obesity issue among Native Americans.

Although Native Americans are their primary target, the health center will serve all ethnicities. Doors are expected to open by the end of the year.

Direct Link: http://www.620wtmj.com/news/local/Vacant-Goldmans-building-to-become-Native-American-health-center-300377901.html

Extremely Awkward Conversation With a Native American at Redskins Game

Dolph L. Hatfield
4/18/15

It was a cool, late autumn Sunday and the Washington football team was playing a home game. Joseph Bennett, an African American gentleman in his early 60's, was sitting in his usual seat, wearing his customary Indian headdress and burgundy Washington team jacket with its "Redskin" emblems. Joe noticed that the seat next to him was unusually empty.

Another fan sitting a few rows behind Joe shouted "Hey Joe, when are you going to get some real feathers in that bonnet and look like a real fighting Indian Chief?" Joe hollered--- "Tommy, wish I could, but the government has outlawed the use of real eagle feathers!"

At that moment, a gentleman, who was bundled in a heavy jacket with a hood that virtually covered his face, eased into the seat next to Joe. He quickly removed the covering exposing his painted black face, and hastened to introduce himself as Waya of the Cherokee Nation and extended his hand to Joe. Joe looked at Waya, put his hands on his hips and demanded to know, firstly, how he got a ticket to sit next to him and, secondly, how he could be so damn insensitive to paint his face black. Joe continued to speak harshly and said "Just get the hell out of here, NOW!" Waya quickly responded "how can you be so insensitive to wear an Indian headdress?" Joe was taken aback. Joe said, in a less harsh voice, "I have worn this headdress to REDSKINS games for 30 years. I'm considered the team's unofficial mascot." Waya responded "No one asked me how I felt and I'm likely one of the few people at this game who could really tell others how it feels seeing you with your headdress, your Washington team jacket and hearing the "R" word."

Joe looked rather perplexed and responded, "Listen man, Redskins has been used as a term of honor and pride of Native Americans for 80 years and wearing an Indian headdress has been acceptable for as long as I can remember". Waya said "Black faced minstrel shows and painted black faces began in the 1840s and continued in this country until the 1960s".

Waya continued, “People are constantly telling me that the ‘R’ word means honor, but they have no idea how it really feels to an American Indian who associates the term with its history of being derogatory. Indeed, its history is deeply rooted in hatred; it’s even defined in the dictionary as a racial slur to American Indians.” Waya paused then continued. Waya proceeded. “Don’t you think that the affected party is the one who really decides what is racist and what isn’t?” Joe interrupted and, in a more consoling tone, said “Waya, I’d like to hear more of what you are talking about. The crowd is beginning to come in. Let’s slip out where there is less noise and I want to hear more. But PLEASE WIPE THAT CHARCOAL OFF YOUR FACE!” Waya took a towel from his coat and began to wipe his face. Joe, to the amazement of everyone sitting around him, removed his headdress. The two gentlemen began walking towards an exit, while Waya continued wiping the blackness from his face.

The two gentlemen found a quiet place somewhat away from the incoming crowd. Joe said “Go on Waya, you’ve got the floor and this better be good for me to miss part of my game.”

Waya continued “Joe, what you guys experienced is what we are going through now. If I’m not mistaken, in the early civil rights movement, the major emphasis of Black America was confronting many hardships like voting, education and unemployment inequalities, having to ride at the back of buses, separate eating, restroom and theater facilities, that were common place in the South. When the 1964 Civil Rights Act began taking affect and the unconscionable ways of treating African Americans were changing, your leaders turned their attention to addressing issues, such as stereotyping. Just think of the names and caricatures like the ‘N’ word, ‘boy’, ‘spade’, ‘jig’, ‘Sambo’, ‘Aunt Jemima’, ‘Jim Crow’, ‘Sapphire’ and ‘the Mammy’, and public spectacles, such as, painted black faces and black faced minstrel shows that your people said were demeaning. Many whites claimed that this was the way of life in America and it had been that way for years, many said they were only having some good, clean fun, meant no harm and there was no racism intended. But fortunately for blacks, much of white society realized the injustices of how Black America had been treated and they accepted that these acts that you,“ Waya pointed gently at Joe and continued “the affected party, said were stereotyping, and change occurred.” The two men looked at each other and Joe rubbed his head. “Waya, I have to agree with a lot you have said, please go on.”

“Thanks, Joe!” and Waya continued, “These changes did not come overnight and typecasting of blacks had been a way of life in America for many, many years. To my knowledge, there were no polls taken to see what percentage of blacks, or for that matter, other Americans, were opposed to these uses of derogatory words or stereotyping in general. But, Joe, there were many polls that have been conducted to see how many American Indians or Washington team fans think the ‘R’ word is racist.”

Waya realized that Joe was beginning to see his point and proceeded “I have often wondered if a poll had been taken among blacks, primarily living in the Deep South in the mid to late 1960’s, whether they cared that much about typecasting or the many other issues that Black America was facing. Recall that virtually all of the blacks in the South

depended on whites for their jobs and livelihood. I would guess that the vast majority would have said these issues are not that important ---- wouldn't they more likely have said *that our jobs and livelihood depend on whites and we have to survive!*"

Waya again paused then began speaking slowly "Weren't the 'preachings', if I can use the word 'preachings', of the Rap Browns, Huey P. Newtons and the Stokely Carmichaels really about shaming blacks into ascertaining their own identity that was totally independent of white society? I've always looked at this as if these activists wanted Black America to realize that they could not depend on whites anymore, but had to depend on themselves."

The two men were quiet for a few moments and Joe said "Waya, I never equated our previous pain of going through our 'stereotyping', as you call it, with that of Native Americans. I wonder why we haven't seen your pain more clearly."

Waya continued, "Joe, look at what most other minorities have experienced. Virtually all of them have been typecast at one time or another. If I'm not mistaken, Jewish Americans were stereotyped in cartoons and depicted in caricatures with large hook noses, curly hair, olive brown skin and being miserly with money in the early part of the 20th Century. Let's take Asian Americans and look at the subsequent fallout they felt from the typecasting of Japanese during and after the Second World War. They were illustrated in cartoons with exaggerated slanted eyes and buck teeth, and referred to as 'Japs'. Chinese were often depicted in Asiatic Hordes, while Asians in general were referred to in terms of the 'Yellow Peril'. During the Vietnam War, the North Vietnamese were called 'gooks', 'Charlie' and 'zipper heads', Mexican Americans have been stereotyped in advertising, such as, 'The Frito Bandito', depicted in cartoons as lazy and referred to as 'wet backs'. Even Italian, German and Irish Americans have also felt the sting of the whip at one time or another, being stereotyped in society and the news media."

The crowd roared and Waya stopped talking. After a brief pause, he continued. "Joe, you've listened to me enough. I think the Washington team may have scored. Why don't you go back to your game? I do appreciate our conversation and you taking time to listen to me. You are an important participant of the Washington team game." Joe shook his head and said "I can't leave this conversation. I've always thought of myself as a compassionate person; let's see what more you want to say. Please."

"Joe, I appreciate your time and you listening to me. Each of those examples of past racial insensitivities is easily comprehensible and acceptable as racially derogatory, and politically incorrect in today's society. The harbinger of change in all cases began with the affected party, *the only one who could rightfully feel the depth of the pain of stereotyping*, their concerns were heard and others in society ultimately agreed. Claims of historical uses by the perpetrators, the reasons given for using a specific term, and the number of affected individuals involved as motives for continuing to use the name were of no consequence; don't you agree?" Joe only listened and did not respond.

“Joe, I blame America as a whole for not responding to our problem, but listen, virtually every minority has been through the same thing.’ Waya paused and then continued, emphasizing each word. “We are currently the most stereotyped minority in sports and advertising, much, much more than just the ‘R’ word and the accompanying Washington team’s and fans’ Indian paraphernalia. I’ll give you many other examples in sports - the Cleveland Indians and their mascot, Chief Wahoo. The Atlanta Braves and their tomahawk chop, the Chicago Blackhawks with their logo of an American Indian, the Kansas City Chiefs and Arrowhead Stadium, and the colleges, high schools and other professional teams with their monikers, mascots and Indian images. Examples in advertising are Pontiac, Winnebago, Dodge Dakota, Jeep CHEROKEE”, Waya paused, as he had perhaps overly emphasized Cherokee, but quickly went on. “Crazy Horse Malt Liquor, Hamm’s Beer, Gray Owl Rice, Umpqua Diary Products, Sue Bee Honey, Land O’ Lakes and Arrowhead Bottled Water.”

“Stop this, Waya. Now I’ve heard enough.” Joe said. “You can’t tell me you object to Jeep Cherokee? Man, that, if anything, is an honor! You’re way off base and way too sensitive.”

Joe said “OK, Waya, go on and this better be good.” Waya continued. “Joe, I look at things a bit differently. Remember, we Cherokees are a nation of people. You’ve heard of the Cherokee Nation. Right?” Waya said “Joe, I also look at Mexico as a nation of people, and would anyone dare make a Jeep….” Waya paused, as if to say to Joe, you complete the ‘Jeep ____’. Joe looked sternly at Waya and nodded indicating for him to continue.

“I think the reason that other minorities don’t identify with our feelings, even though they experienced similar types of typecasting, is that it is a characteristic of humans that we see the things that affect us and not the things that affect others. We really only feel our own pain!” Waya paused momentarily. Joe tilted his head slightly, nodded while raising his eyebrows indicating that Waya had made a good point.

The two men became quiet. Joe slowly shook his head and said “You have thought about this a lot, Waya, and I know you have much more to say. But I’ve learned a lot and have a lot to think about. Shall we stop?”

Waya also sensed that it was time to close. He smiled, cocked his head slightly to one side, gave a slight bow indicating to Joe how much he appreciated the talk and offered his hand. Joe enthusiastically shook Waya’s hand and said “I will never wear this headdress again. That will tell so many of the fans that a big change has occurred. I will have to do some explaining, but will handle that. Thank you, Waya.”

“Many thanks for taking time to chat. I learned a lot too. I appreciate you not wearing the headdress. Joe patted Waya on the back and turned his head quickly as his eyes seemed to fill with water. He headed in the direction of his stadium seat leaving his headdress behind.

Waya went towards one of the exits.

Dolph L. Hatfield has been involved in civil rights issues since the late 1960s and involved in combating stereotyping of Native Americans since the mid-1990s. He has written several articles on these issues which may be found on his website www.dolphhatfield.com/ under the links Published and Unpublished.

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/18/extremely-awkward-conversation-native-american-redskins-game

Texas distributor brings Native American beef back to Native American reservations

Ranch-to-casino system creates top seller

By Lynn Brezosky

April 18, 2015 Updated: April 18, 2015 11:11pm



Sales Manager Josh Klein (left) speaks Monday April 13, 2015 at Labatt Food Service's Direct Source Meats about cutting beef shoulder meat. Attending the tour of Direct Source Meats are

(center to left) Elwood Pahi of the Navajo Nation, Dan Byrd of Byrd Cattle Company, Tim Kozenskie of Navajo Gaming, and Nora Pahi also of the Navajo Nation. Labatt Food Services is leading an effort to make Navajo and other Native Americans niche players in the beef industry and industries other than gambling.

Pork meat cubes fall into a bin Monday April 13, 2015 at Labatt Food Service's Direct Source Meats in San Antonio as a tour is given to people from Native American Indian territories and others. Labatt Food Service is leading an effort to make Navajo and other Native Americans niche players in the beef industry.

Native American Kurt Sandoval has raised cattle on Jicarilla Apache reservation land in New Mexico since 1984, but don't make the mistake of calling him a cowboy. He wears a beaded medallion rather than boots and a Stetson, and takes a philosophical turn when asked about veering from traditional grazing practices.

"I don't think there's such a thing as traditional," he said. "Wherever you're raised, that's how it is."

But Sandoval is interested in getting a better price for his beef and found himself hooked on the notion of Native American beef getting star billing at Native American steak houses.

Hence his presence at a celebratory dinner Monday at upscale Biga on the Banks, where a banquet cook served thin slices of Native American beef with dabs of rosemary chimichurri and coffee aioli. Entrees included Native American New York strip and rib-eye with sides of smashed fingerling potatoes, Brussels sprouts with red pepper, and slow-baked tomatoes.

The dinner was sponsored by San Antonio's Labatt Food Service, a family-owned distributorship that in 2013 had more than $1 billion in sales. The celebration marked Labatt's rollout of a ranch-to-plate quality and distribution system that in three years has made Native American beef one of the top sellers at Native American casino restaurants.

"I believe in the concept," Sandoval said. "The way I look at it, it's almost like promoting sovereignty, promoting an animal for consumers, and the consumers can actually be my people."

Not that there isn't something in it for Labatt. As the first private enterprise able to take the Native American beef vision to execution, Labatt potentially has a market lock on a niche product that sells as much on emotion as on quality.

"We have what is called a product that has a halo on it," said Al Silva, Labatt's general manager and chief operating officer. "It doesn't only just feed you, it actually creates a social good. ... You're actually creating jobs."

For now, the main customers are reservation casinos with high-end restaurants. For later, Labatt envisions selling Native American beef to restaurants and high-end groceries throughout its growing territory, if not nationally and globally.

It's been a challenge. Some reservation land is so poor a tractor wheel can wipe out the vegetation on its path for several years. The meat has had a reputation for being stringy and low-grade. Lacking the negotiating power of the mega-ranchers, operators have had to settle with selling their small number of head as a commodity that fetches only the lowest price.

Labatt's approach has been to gain trust with the producers, bring in experts who teach how to improve genetics and meat grade, and oversee the feed lot, processing, tracking and shipping so they can then sell Indian nations back a verified line of Native American beef.

"Somebody had to put all that together, and so that's kind of what we did," company CEO and President Blair Labatt said.

Monday's dinner capped the second of a three-night educational and networking conference that brought ranchers from several Indian nations into the same classroom at Labatt. The symposium featured discussions on genetics, herd health, feed-yard economics, tracking and record keeping, and producing higher grades of beef. It was also a chance to discuss two years of data.

"We've been compiling all of the data, the performance data, the health data, the carcass data," said Jason Byrd, operations director for Labatt's Direct Source Meats division. "Now is a good time to get all of the producers that have contributed to the program together and talk about where we need to go."

Labatt's Native American beef journey started in 2009, when the company acquired Zanios Food Inc. of Albuquerque, New Mexico. Until then, Labatt's growth had been organic. An acquisition was uncharted territory.

Labatt believes it's critical to get to know one's marketplace, and for New Mexico that included 23 Indian tribes.

"When you're in this kind of business, you have to think about why would some group of people who don't know you want to know you. What do you have that's going to help them?" he said.

Buying local was catching on, and there was a concept of selling New Mexicans some New Mexican beef. But with no major feedlots or slaughterhouses in New Mexico, animals got sent out of state and were lost in a vast processing system.

“It kind of crashed and burned,” Labatt said. “We picked it up and reinvented it, and we do it to this day. But in the process, Al and I said, 'Why couldn’t we do this with the Indians?’

“Here’s the deal,” he added. “It’s poor land, high unemployment, virtually total unemployment. The root systems are so narrow, are so shallow, that the land actually has to be worked on horseback. You can raise an animal, (but just) one for every 200 acres”. … But, you know what, guess how many acres they have — 25 million!”

The company connected with a federal demonstration ranch called Padres Mesa, a 60,900-acre portion of the New Lands area of the Navajo Nation.

They met with reservation ranchers and convinced them they could be their own best customer. Padres Mesa could teach techniques and genetics to improve their product. Labatt could provide the assets needed to get the meat to market.

Labatt described the initial meetings as “Henry Kissinger diplomacy.”

“Literally, you’re kind of having to overcome doubt and uncertainty and explaining why it’s valuable,” he said. “They have a reason to be cynical. They’ve been exploited for many, many years. So you come in — why are you any different?”

Next was partnering with a feed lot operator, in this case, Billy Hall of Premium Sourced Cattle LLC in Chappell, Nebraska, and Eckley, Colorado.

“When I take ownership those calves weigh 500 pounds and then we own them all the way through till they’re harvested,” Hall said. “All of our employees are BQA (Beef Quality Assurance) certified. They are trained in low stress handling, sorting, different things like that.”

The lot pays a premium for the calf, Hall said, then returns data from performance to harvest. It pays an incentive premium for choice and prime grades.

Hall is pushing Angus genetics over popular American breeds that include Brahman.

“That’s another thing that’s real important on our spec, just because those cattle genetically don’t tend to marble near as well,” Byrd said. “When you’re talking about Brahmans, they typically fall in the select category, whereas this program is choice and above.”

Having two meat-processing plants, including the only one in New Mexico, gave Labatt another edge in the game, as does a fleet of trucks.

By bringing on IMI Global, a tracking firm, Labatt was able to ensure what was sold as Native American beef was an animal that was born and grazed on a reservation.

“Anybody can speed in marketing, anybody can tell you what they want to, because there’s nobody giving tickets,” Silva said. “You have to do the opposite. You have to actually go in there and you have to hire somebody to police it, because it’s unpoliced.”

In 2014, the program put about 1,200 head of cattle on feed. Labatt returned about 430,000 pounds of steaks and burger meat to the reservations.

Labatt knew it had scored when a load of about 35 cattle graded 85 percent choice and 15 percent prime.

“Prime is only 2 percent of all animals, so now it’s kind of like the home run — the ultimate,” Labatt said.

Tim Kozenskie, food and beverage director for the Navajo Nation’s Twin Arrows casino resort, said Native American beef is getting rave reviews at the property’s Zenith Steakhouse. There, “Source Verified Navajo Beef” menu items (served with a cipollini cabernet demi glace) cost from $28 for petite filet mignon to $50 for a 34-ounce long bone rib-eye or a 22-ounce porterhouse.

“Our main mover is Navajo beef,” he said. “It’s a piece of beef that has a sweetness to it. It’s got a buttery texture as well as a sweet flavor to it. Almost to the point of fork tender, that’s how good it is.”

That works for the Navajos, said Leo Watchman, director of the nation’s Agriculture Department.

“I can see us meeting demands in the near future above what we’re doing now,” he said. “Our role is pretty limited, but we have been sold and we want to be more of a player on our part.”

Fewer than 3 percent of the nation’s ranchers have signed on to the program, he said.

“The Navajo nation as a whole, pretty much if you were to qualify as a ranch, it’s the largest ranch in North America. But there’s a lot of independents. And we’re just scratching the surface of a market that’s uniquely native.”

Direct Link: http://www.expressnews.com/business/local/article/Texas-distributor-brings-Native-American-beef-6208976.php

College students in ‘red face’ mock native elder, claim racist party is ceremony to ‘impregnate women’

David Edwards
19 Apr 2015 at 15:35 ET



Nathan Phillips (WXYZ)

A group of college students at Eastern Michigan University are under investigation after they allegedly held a "Red Face" party and shouted racial slurs at an elderly Native American man who complained to them that he was offended.

Omaha Nation member Nathan Phillips told WXYZ that he is proud of his Native American heritage, so he was upset when students saw him on the street last Friday and waved him over to their "Red Face" party.

"About the same time I noticed them, some of them noticed me and waved me over," he said, recalling that the 30 to 40 students had their faces painted red and that they were wearing headpieces made out of feathers.

Phillips said that the students said that the party was themed on Eastern Michigan University's original nickname, the Hurons, which was changed to the Eagles in the 1990s after decades of resistance from the Native American community. The university also changed its American Indian logo that was associated with the Huron nickname.

"We are Hurons and we are doing a ceremony to impregnate women," one of the students said, according to Native News Online.

"This isn't honoring us, this is racist. And as soon as I said 'racist,' it turned from honoring the Indians to, 'Go back to the reservation, you F-ing Indian, get the F out of here.'"

Phillips said that someone threw a beer can at him before he was able to leave.

Native American Student Organization Vice President said that the incident left her worried that native students would not feel safe on campus.

“We know that cultural appropriation very often leads violence to towards the culture that is being appropriated,” she explained, adding that any use of the word “hurons” fostered “dehumanization of our community.”

In a statement released last week, Eastern Michigan University said that officials were investigating the incident.

“Officials at Eastern Michigan University became aware on Sunday, April 12, 2015 that a party took place the previous afternoon at an off-campus location on Hamilton Street,” the statement said. “It was reported that some of those in attendance at the party were EMU students dressed as Native Americans. It was further reported that the group had an altercation with a member of the community who, upon witnessing the students, expressed offense regarding their dress and behavior.”

“The investigation into this matter is ongoing, and will be guided by the University’s policies and procedures that govern student conduct.”

Lietz remarked that she hoped that the university would use the opportunity to “finally come out and condemn this sort of behavior.”

Watch the video below from WXYZ, broadcast April 19, 2015.

Direct Link: http://www.rawstory.com/2015/04/college-students-in-red-face-mock-native-elder-claim-racist-party-is-ceremony-to-impregnate-women/

In Puerto Rico, a Push to Revive Indigenous Culture

SAN LORENZO, Puerto Rico — Apr 20, 2015, 12:29 AM ET
By DANICA COTO Associated Press

In Puerto Rico's misty, bamboo-studded mountains, elementary school students are studying a nearly extinct language, beating on drums and growing native crops like cassava and sweet potato as they learn about the indigenous people who lived on the island before Christopher Columbus.

The children in four towns in the island's southeast corner play a ceremonial ball game that was called batey by the native Tainos, who were all but wiped out during colonial times. The boys and girls also learn words from the local Arawak language, which was in part rebuilt with help from linguists, and still exists in varying forms among other native groups in the hemisphere.

Now, a group of academics and educators hope to expand the Taino education program to other public schools around the U.S. territory in an effort to teach children this little known part of the territory's history.

"If you don't know your roots, you don't know yourself," said anthropologist Carlalynne Yarey Melendez, director of the Taino cultural organization that runs the educational program. "There are so many communities and schools that want the classes, but I can't keep up with the demand."

Puerto Ricans' interest in the territory's indigenous past has grown in recent years, with 42,000 of the 3.7 million people then living on the island identifying themselves as at least partially Taino in the 2010 Census.

But even though that's just a little more than 1 percent, Puerto Rico's legislature is considering a proposal to declare Melendez's Naguake organization to be the island's first indigenous-based community. The designation would allow it to receive federal funds under a program that aids native groups, and expand the program to other towns.

"As one of our elders said at one time, 'Just as they wrote us off the books, we will write ourselves back in,'" said Tai Pelli, a liaison officer for the New York-based United Confederation of Taino People.

Melendez has lobbied legislators to pass the proposed measure. She has also worked with U.S. researchers on several recent DNA studies sponsored by the National Geographic Society to explore the lineage of people living in certain regions of Puerto Rico.

Before Europeans came to the New World, the Tainos also lived in the nearby islands of Cuba, Hispaniola, Jamaica and other parts of the Caribbean, and spoke the Arawak language. The Tainos are a subgroup of the Arawak Indians.

Historians and anthropologists believe that up to 60,000 Tainos lived in Puerto Rico when Columbus arrived in 1493, but their ranks were soon decimated by infectious diseases, such as smallpox, brought from Europe.

Today, many towns in Puerto Rico bear Taino names, but there are few remaining traces of the culture except for several well-known landmarks. There's a massive river boulder carved with petroglyphs in the central town of Jayuya. The Caguana indigenous park in the central town of Utuado also features petroglyphs, along with artifacts and ceremonial plazas.

The program has met resistance from parents suspicious of an unfamiliar language and culture. Melendez said some parents in the program here were skeptical until their children shared what they had learned.

Maribel Rodriguez said her 9-year-old Brayan Lopez is enthralled by the classes.

Brayan is a fourth grader and one of the designated caciques — or chieftains — because of his musical skills. He gets to blow a conch shell known as a fotuto while other students gather around him and beat on their mayoacanes — small, elongated wooden drums that the Tainos used.

"He wakes up in the morning and it's all, 'The Tainos, the Tainos, the Tainos,'" Rodriguez said with a laugh.

Direct Link: http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/puerto-rico-push-revive-indigenous-culture-30436919

I Am Not Your Mascot, Biloxi!

Deloria Many Grey Horses
4/20/15

Oki, good day!

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Biloxi High School Alumni community for helping to raise awareness on the misappropriation and exploitation of Native American cultures. They are doing this by using "Indians" as a school mascot and by having their entire marching band wear feather headdresses. Your lack of understanding for our Native American sacred regalia perpetuates ethnic stereotyping and is a violation of our basic human rights. We are not your mascots. We are human beings with families and a long history of cultural genocide and displacement. Our ancestors were silenced for more than 400 years. No more! We are arising and vocalizing our positions on any issues pertaining to us—individually, and as families, homes and nations!

Biloxi High School, you are not a new-age hipster at Coachella or a high fashion model—you are, instead, an institute of learning. Your school is government-funded and represents Biloxi County and Mississippi. You have standards to which you must adhere. You have a responsibility to properly educate your students on the spiritual principles of integrity and respect for all human beings regardless of their race, socio-economic status, or gender. It is my hope in the year 2015 your teachers, principals and community leaders will broaden the accuracy of their knowledge of Native American cultures and their histories—a necessary step toward improved racial relations. Dehumanizing of Native Americans is not acceptable.

On Tuesday morning April 13, 2015, I was reading through my newsfeed on Facebook. I came across an Indian Country article on F.A.I.R. Media (Fair Accurate Indigenous Representation). The article featured the Biloxi “Indians” High School marching band from Biloxi, Mississippi wearing headdresses as part of the band uniforms. The band, made up of 81 students, recently preformed in Washington, DC at the National Cherry

Blossom Festival. On national television, the entire band performed in Native American Plains-style headdresses.

I remember taking a deep breath as my heart sank into my stomach. As an Indigenous woman from the Blackfoot Confederacy, Chickasaw, and Yankton Sioux Nations I have experienced racism first hand. I am visibly First Nations/Native American and I also carry my maternal grandfather's last name Many Grey Horses. As a child, I was teased for being a "dirty squaw" and told to get back to the reserve where I belonged. As a child in elementary school it was hard not to internalize these hateful remarks from peers and adults. Research has shown racism is a learned behavior from birth to the teenage years. My peers didn't just wake up one day and say, "I'm going to be a racist." Rather, the most likely place where they learned racism—consciously and unconsciously—is in their homes. I recall feeling isolated, dreading the first day of class each year just because I knew the teachers would be calling out our last name. I always felt targeted for being different. I saw the subtle dirty looks directed at my appearance, coming from peers and even teachers. The unspoken message came across loud and clear: That my Nativeness does not have a place in the aesthetic of colonialism.

My mother is a member of the Kainai First Nation of Southern Alberta, Canada. My father is member of the Chickasaw and Yankton Sioux Nations, USA. He was born in Lawrence, Kansas at the Haskell Indian Boarding School, where my grandparents met while attending school. This makes me a dual citizen. I moved to California from Alberta, Canada when I was 15 years old to attend the Thacher School, a boarding prep school in Ojai Valley. It's an extremely academic and prestigious school where racism and discrimination are not tolerated. Not only do the teachers promote equality but so does the student body. It was the first time in my life I wasn't made fun of for being Native American. My peers, teachers and the academic community encouraged me to be proud of being Indigenous—and this is what an academic institute of learning should look like. At any rate I was able to focus on my studies and not have to worry about being hit with the forces of racial discrimination.

I then went on to University of California, Berkeley where I met a group of progressive, intellectual and open-minded Native American students who really ignited a fire in me to stand up to the injustices my people experience on a daily basis. I majored in Native American Studies and Ethnic Studies, which provided me with a historical context to why Native American's are experience a high level of systemic issues including high rates of First Nations/Native Americans in the child welfare system and in the criminal justice systems, high teen suicide rates, poverty, domestic violence and health related issues.

In the Dakota culture, the ultimate goal in life is to be a good relative. It was this teaching, my academic rhetoric and supportive extended family that molded and shaped me into the community advocate I am today. I am also a mother to a beautiful 22-month old little girl. The thought of her having to experience hatred for being Indigenous is horrible. I am sure any mother can relate in wanting to protect her child from injustice and unnecessary trauma. As Indigenous Peoples our time is here to create a different

story for the next generation of children. It is our responsibility to teach our young people that it's okay to have a strong voice and to stand up for themselves and all relatives.

My struggles in life motivated me to stand up to Biloxi High School. I reposted the article and a community leader whom I greatly respect encouraged me to call the school to make a complaint. Although, the school did not answer any of my calls I was able to leave a complaint with the Biloxi Superintendent's office. I thought to myself, "Why stop here?" With the help of a fellow Berkeley alum and another community advocate, I started a petition on Change.org requesting Biloxi to please change their band uniform and mascot.

Within four days, we got over 500 signatures. People across Turtle Island who are just as passionate on the subject took to social media and help raise awareness about the petition. I was pleased with the support the petition was getting, so I shared an update on my Facebook page yesterday. Within a few hours I received an email from Facebook stating that I had been reported for using a fake name and my account was temporarily shut down. I had to provide a government-issued ID in order to have my account reactivated.

Biloxi High School Alumni are defending themselves by stating they are "honoring" Native Americans—when it appears they are simply "playing Indian," something that doesn't honor us at all. The available research on the history on the Biloxi Tribe reveals that the majority of the Biloxi Nation was decimated by the chicken pox epidemic in the 1800s and then the remaining members were forcibly removed to Missouri. The Biloxi language is extinct and their traditional headdress is *not* the Northern Plains style headdress.

So I would suggest to the Biloxi Alumni that if you're talking about honoring or respecting the Biloxi Tribe, please show respect to the *actual* traditions of the Biloxi Tribe.

I have been diplomatic regarding my interactions with Biloxi including conveying my position statement on this issue. My cousin Jacqueline Keeler, a long time standing advocate for against "Indians" as mascots eloquently states, "I find it ironic that Biloxi Alumni are defending their right to mascot Indigenous peoples and misappropriate our headdress by trying to silence actual Native people." Nevertheless, their effort to silence me has inspired me to stand up for justice and to honor my commitment toward advancing social justice for Indigenous Peoples. The Biloxi Alumni seem to feel threatened by our petition, and thus they are retaliating. They started their own petition to keep their "Indian" Mascot and refer to themselves as a "Nation."

As I said earlier, I am grateful the Biloxi High School Alumni—their reaction to concern from myself and other actual Natives has helped to stimulate discussion on the issue.

I encourage you to please sign the petition if you haven't yet. Indigenous Peoples are strong in number and together we need to show Biloxi High School and other institutes of learning that this is not acceptable behavior on the Earth Our Mother.

My Facebook account was reactivated this morning after I sent them government issued ID. I'm happy that Facebook responded to the situation quickly. This generation of Native Americans and First Nations will no longer be silenced. *Here us roar Biloxi Alumni!* We are not going anywhere and will continue to stand up to this injustice.

Lilililili!!!!

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/20/i-am-not-your-mascot-biloxi-160087

Oregon woman denied use of Facebook because of Native American name

Posted 8:10 AM, April 21, 2015, by CNN Wire



Salem, OR — For five days, Brenna Happy Cloud was in Facebook purgatory. She tried repeatedly to log in, only to be told she was locked out. All of it, it turns out, was because of her name.

Happy Cloud, who is Native American, received responses from Facebook's help desk, prompting her to validate her unusual name. She was asked for proof of identity, even a copy of her social security card. All the while, she had no access to her contacts, photos and messages.

"I was gone. And the world didn't know where I was," said Happy Cloud.

Happy Cloud finally figured out a way to get her account back online, but she had to change her screen name to her married name, Rojas, even though she is no longer with her husband.

“Other people can use their nicknames, inappropriate names, but I can’t use my real name,” said Happy Cloud. “It kind of hurts a little bit.”

Happy Cloud believes Facebook’s policies, in this instance, are discriminatory, that her Native American heritage is either being undermined or denied.

An email to Facebook’s Customer Service Department asking for comment on the situation was not returned.

Direct Link: http://q13fox.com/2015/04/21/oregon-woman-denied-use-of-facebook-because-of-native-american-name/

Did Father Serra abuse Native Americans? Vatican goes on the offensive to defend priest

April 21, 2015

The Rev. Junipero Serra, the Spanish priest who founded the California missions, will be canonized in September.

Vatican officials made a forceful defense Monday of the legacy of 18th century Spanish missionary Father Junipero Serra against allegations of brutality toward Native Americans.

The move was met with criticism from Southern California opponents of Serra’s impending sainthood who said that the Catholic Church is ignoring historical fact, and support from those who say the priest embodies the qualities sought in canonization.

Pope Francis is scheduled to canonize Serra on Sept. 23 at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., at the start of a trip to the United States. The Vatican announced Monday that Francis will celebrate a Mass in honor of Serra on May 2 in Rome during a daylong celebration of the missionary’s legacy.

Since Francis announced in January that he would make the founder of California’s mission system a saint, the Catholic Church has faced a steady stream of sometimes-angry denunciation from American Indians and others, who accuse the church of honoring a man they associate with the deaths of thousands of Native Americans, the enslavement of converts to Christianity and the devastation of native culture. Some say he set in motion the genocide of California Indians.

An effort to switch out Serra’s statue from the Capitol’s National Statuary Hall began after the announcement of his impending canonization. The California Senate last week approved replacing it with the nation’s first woman to go into space, Sally Ride.

The news conference Vatican officials held Monday in Rome responded to some of the allegations. But Cliff Trafzer, director of UC Riverside's California Center for Native Nations and a history professor, said the church continues to ignore the American Indian viewpoint on Serra.

"I still feel Pope Francis is misguided and that the church has not listened to Native American input from the start," said Trafzer, who is part Wyandot Indian. "Father Serra represents the invasion of California and the taking of native lands."

Trafzer pointed to research by the University of Redlands' James Sandos saying that church hearings in the 1940s toward the beginning of the canonization process did not discuss evidence that Spanish secular authorities believed Serra was overly harsh in his treatment of Indians.

Vatican officials Monday said Serra worked in defense of Native Americans, often intervening to spare them from more brutal colonial officials.

The Rev. Vincenzo Criscuolo, a Franciscan at the Vatican's saint-making office, said it was important to look at Serra as "a man of his time" who, like many others in that era, used corporal punishment as an educational tool.

"It is not to be excluded, but it wasn't 'genocide,' it wasn't a death penalty," he told reporters.

Steven Hackel, author of the 2013 biography "Junipero Serra: California's Founding Father" and a history professor at UCR, said Serra "at various points did take a position that seemed to be protecting Indians." For example, Serra called for the pardoning of two Indians who were eligible for execution, Hackel said.

Hackel said that may have been an example of Serra's mercy, but it also may have been because the priest recognized that killing the two would have set back missionaries' efforts to convert the Indians to Christianity.

"Too often there's this image of Serra as a benevolent Franciscan, but people don't consider what other things happened at the missions," he said.

Monsignor Arthur Holquin, liturgical consultant for the Diocese of Orange and pastor emeritus at the Mission Basilica San Juan Capistrano, said that Serra, like all human beings, made mistakes.

"No one of us is going to be a perfect exemplar of Christ in our lives," he said. "There is always going to be human imperfection. ... God's mercy is always for those who day to day try to grow in the likeness of Christ."

Nicole Winfield of The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Direct Link: http://www.ocregister.com/articles/serra-658792-native-california.html

Federal Panel Reviewing Native American Sentencing

Committee is evaluating whether those living on reservations face disproportionately harsher penalties than other citizens



Heather Dawn Thompson, a former South Dakota federal prosecutor who now represents Native American tribes, hopes her fellow Native Americans gain more control over the legal process on reservations. Photo: Sean Ryan for The Wall Street Journal

By
Dan Frosch
April 21, 2015 5:30 a.m. ET

Spurred by concerns from judges, prosecutors and tribal leaders, a federal panel is reviewing whether Native Americans living on reservations face disproportionately harsher punishments for crimes than other Americans.

Ralph Erickson, chief federal district court judge for North Dakota and head of the U.S. Sentencing Commission committee conducting the review, is among those calling for an examination of the sentencing practices on the nation's 325 reservations.

"No matter how long I have been sentencing in Indian Country, I find it gut-wrenching when I am asked by a family member of a person I have sentenced why Indians are sentenced to longer sentences than white people who commit the same crime," Judge Erickson, who was appointed by President George W. Bush, wrote in a 2014 letter to a fellow jurist.

The key reason for the discrepancies is that Native Americans typically are prosecuted under federal law for serious offenses committed on reservations. State punishments for the same crimes tend to be lighter.

“Our problem is that we just don’t know how much different the disparities are,” Judge Erickson said in a recent interview.

The committee consists of nearly two dozen judges and federal and tribal officials—a mix of Democratic and Republican appointees—including Troy Eid, the former Bush-appointed U.S. attorney of Colorado who wrote a letter urging the Sentencing Commission to look into the issue.

Heather Dawn Thompson, a former South Dakota federal prosecutor who now represents tribes, said she wants her fellow Native Americans to have more input as to who prosecutes crimes on reservations, and appropriate punishments.



Heather Dawn Thompson, left, speaks with with Wakpamni Lake Community president Geneva Lone Hill during a tour of a community center construction project on April 13 south of Batesland, S.D., on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. Photo: Sean Ryan for The Wall Street Journal

“Every American, except Native Americans, has a direct democratic voice in their local and state laws,” Ms. Thompson said. “For Native Americans, this is all governed federally.”

Neil Fulton, the chief federal public defender for North and South Dakota and a member of the review committee, pointed to several cases he said illustrated the sentencing disparities.

In one, a Native American man Mr. Fulton represented in 2011 was sentenced to 45 months in prison for assault after punching another man in the face during a fight at a casino on a North Dakota reservation.

“My sense is if that this happened in a bar in Bismarck—if it gets charged at all—I don’t see the sentence that high,” he said.

Another case that has drawn scrutiny is that of Dana Deegan, who lived on North Dakota's Fort Berthold Indian Reservation and is serving a 10-year prison sentence after pleading guilty to second-degree murder for abandoning her newborn son to die in 1998.



A photo of Dana Deegan and one of her daughters. Ms. Deegan is serving 10 years in prison for leaving her newborn to die. Photo: Ackerman + Gruber for The Wall Street Journal

The penalty was upheld by the Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals in 2010, but in dissent, Judge Myron Bright wrote that Ms. Deegan's punishment "represents the most clear sentencing error" he had seen. He noted a similar case where a North Dakota State University woman pleaded guilty to negligent homicide in state court and was sentenced to three years of supervised probation.

Judge Bright has pressed the Sentencing Commission to take action and has cited two other similar North Dakota cases that occurred off the reservation and also were treated more leniently in state court. In those instances, punishment ranged from a suspended one-year jail sentence to two years in prison.

There are about 5.2 million Native Americans in the U.S., and about 22% live on reservations or other tribal lands, according to census data.

In the past five years, the number of Native Americans in the federal prison system has jumped 27%, an increase that helped prompt the review. In South Dakota, Native Americans make up nearly 60% of the federal caseload, but only 9% of the population, federal figures show.

In a 2008 article in the Marquette Law Review, lawyer Timothy Droske noted that a defendant convicted of assault in South Dakota state court received an average sentence of 29 months. A Native American defendant on a South Dakota Indian reservation who was prosecuted in federal court for the same offense received an average penalty of 47 months, Mr. Droske wrote.

A 2014 North Dakota Law Review article by lead author B.J. Jones said Native American defendants convicted in federal court in the state likely were to serve out the majority of five-year sentences because there is no parole under the federal system.

Mr. Jones, director of the Tribal Judicial Institute at University of North Dakota's law school, noted in the article that a comparable sentence in North Dakota state court may result in defendants serving less than 25% of their time, due to parole or good behavior.

A 2003 Sentencing Commission study found the impact of federal penalties on Native Americans varied, depending on the crime and location. But the survey showed several clear disparities.

In New Mexico, for example, the average sentence for a Native American convicted of assault in state court was six months, compared with an average of 54 months for Native Americans convicted of assault in New Mexico federal court.

Part of the focus of the current committee, which began meeting last month and is set to issue its report in May 2016, will be to gather comparable state and federal sentencing data to determine if there is a disparity and if changes are needed. The panel will submit recommendations to the full Sentencing Commission, which establishes sentencing policies for federal courts.

Corrections & Amplifications:
Geneva Lone Hill is president of the Wakpamni Lake Community. A photo caption in an earlier version of this article incorrectly misspelled her name. (April 21, 2015)

Direct Link: http://www.wsj.com/articles/federal-panel-reviewing-native-american-sentencing-1429608601

2016: Hillary Clinton Campaign Launches 'Native Americans For Hillary' Group

Simon Moya-Smith
4/20/15

Presidential hopeful Hillary Rodham Clinton is once again vying for the Native American vote.

Hidden deep in her campaign's website, Native Americans in support of Clinton can join a "Native Americans for Hillary" group and sign up to host a "meeting or house party." They can also "join a local Native American event," the website reads.

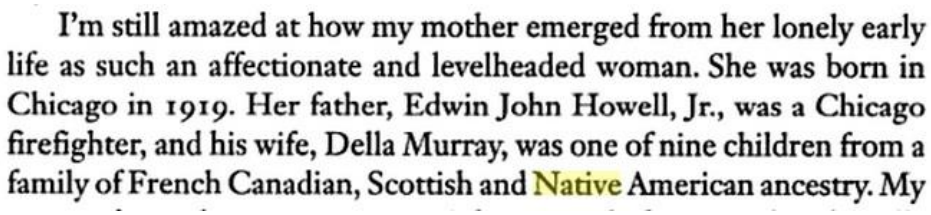


readyforhillary.com

Following registration, an automated email is sent to supporters. The email reads: "With your help, we will show that the Native American community across the country is Ready for Hillary!"

Since she announced her candidacy more than a week ago, Clinton, who unsuccessfully ran for president in 2008, has not publicly stated whether she'll stump at any of the country's 325 reservations while on the campaign trail.

In her 2003 autobiography, "Living History," Clinton claimed to have Native American heritage. She wrote that her maternal grandmother belonged to a family with "French Canadian, Scottish and Native American ancestry."


I'm still amazed at how my mother emerged from her lonely early life as such an affectionate and levelheaded woman. She was born in Chicago in 1919. Her father, Edwin John Howell, Jr., was a Chicago firefighter, and his wife, Della Murray, was one of nine children from a family of French Canadian, Scottish and Native American ancestry. My

Clinton isn't the only presidential candidate who's hoping to garner the Native American vote. A Twitter account in favor of the Republican candidate Senator Rand Paul was launched earlier this month with an avatar reading, "Native-American For Rand."

Paul's proposed budget in 2011 called for the elimination of funding to the Bureau of Indian Affairs. At that time, Paul, who is a medical doctor by trade, sought to cut the Indian Health Services budget by half.

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/20/2016-hillary-clinton-campaign-launches-native-americans-hillary-group-160086

A Severe Lack of Clean Water Is Killing Indigenous Children in Colombia

April 21, 2015

By Victoria Mckenzie

Ana Maria Uriayu turns her head away and refuses to speak. Her neighbor talks for her, reciting a tale of loss shared with countless mothers in Colombia's northernmost department of La Guajira: Between the two women, four sons have died in under a year. They blame the dirty water shared by the small community.

Just two and a half miles from the capital of La Guajira, home to Colombia's largest indigenous population, the daily struggle against thirst is written across the bodies of the Wayuu people, an ethnic group of over 400,000 who live in communities scattered throughout the desert peninsula. Several times a day, women wind through cactus forests between their ranches and the muddy catchments where they collect contaminated water, and their children follow on emaciated legs. The trip can take five hours, sometimes more, and must be repeated endlessly. Even the smallest child is enlisted to carry a bucket.

According to National Institute of Health director Fernando de la Hoz, "More people die of drought and dirty water in Colombia than from the armed conflict. And the risk of dying from illnesses related to water is four or five times higher in La Guajira than anywhere else in the country." La Guajira's child mortality rate has reached levels comparable to Rwanda, and not far behind Ethiopia: 50 children die for every 1,000 live births, according to a report by the United Nations. De la Hoz believes the actual death toll to be much higher than official numbers indicate, owing to scarce medical services and a Wayuu tradition of burying one's children on one's own land.

And while the well-publicized crisis has drawn a steady flow of aid and investment to the region over the past decade—including a $90 million World Bank project and a $270 million dam—there is still no water fit for human consumption in La Guajira.

But why have efforts to help residents failed?

A close look at La Guajira's water projects suggests that a lack of public oversight has played a large role in the crisis, along with government policies favoring business interests over human rights.

Record drought hit the region last year, triggering a viral outbreak as people began hoarding water in open containers that are breeding grounds for malaria, dengue, and chikungunya. But local aid workers say El Niño isn't to blame for the current health crisis.

"We can't say that the problem in La Guajira is due to drought—that is false," said Robert Mendez of La Guajira's Office of Disaster and Risk Management. The problem of water in La Guajira goes back many years, and it is due to the bad governance of this department."

La Guajira is infamous for its corruption and mafia politics; the last five governors have been investigated for misappropriating funds meant for public works such as water, sanitation, and health services. The most recent of these, Juan Francisco "Kiko" Gomez, was arrested in 2013 on charges of murder and arms trafficking, only to be replaced by a friend and political ally. But while residents are critical of local politicians, they are even more bitter toward the national government they say has forgotten them.

In 2007, the World Bank approved a $90 million loan for the stated purpose of providing water and sanitation service to people in La Guajira. It was given two extensions, with a new completion date of October this year.

"The [World Bank] project was never executed, there was never any money given to the communities, not even in the urban areas," said Matilde Arpushana, an indigenous leader and human rights worker representing over 200 communities near the state capital. "The water problem persists and it is very bad. Women have to walk five hours, sometimes more in order to get water. There is no water for human consumption in all of La Guajira."

According to Carlos Uribe, the project's water and sanitation specialist, the operation was frustrated from the beginning due lack of cooperation from the local government, employee performance issues, and confusion over a new water policy.

But to Nathanial Meyer, senior water organizer for Corporate Accountability International, the project's continued failure even to provide basic services to the main hospital is just further evidence that the World Bank's private investment model doesn't work. The World Bank, which holds equity shares in private water companies itself, evaluates the La Guajira project's success by the number of contracts that have been signed, rather than actual access to water. Citing failed projects in the Philippines and India, Meyer pointed out that signing a private contract does not guarantee that infrastructure will be extended.

"There is no water for human consumption in all of La Guajira." –Matilde Arpushana

In January, the government signed a decree pushing the expansion of public-private partnerships throughout the country as a solution in poorer areas, even as private companies fail to provide service up and down the Pacific and Caribbean coasts. When asked how private water contracts can ensure service to impoverished regions such as La Guajira, the World Bank refers to existing Colombian laws that guarantee subsidies for public services; significantly, these subsidies only reach up to 70 percent of the tariff for potable water.

"In addition indigenous reservations can apply for subsidies from a different source within their national transfers, which could eventually be used to pay for water supply," said a spokesperson for the World Bank, referring to the General Royalties System.

Both of these entitlements remain largely theoretical in a region with such weak government institutions. When water policy management was delegated to local municipalities during the administration of the World Bank loan, requiring each local government to submit a plan in order to be included, only three out of 15 participated, Uribe said.

"The problem is the in order to do the work, we need to have the project designs, and they needed to be sub-ministered by the municipalities," he told me. "And unfortunately, the institutional capacity of La Guajira is very small, and there were no projects. And in the last four years, there has been very little movement due to governance problems."

In other words, the solution lies in the theoretical application of policies that have so far failed to benefit the population.



Ana Maria Urariyu and Teresa Apushaina on their ranch in Monte Verde, La Guajira

La Guajira's other major infrastructure project, a $270 million dam, was built in 2010 with the objective of providing water service to roughly 400,000 people. It holds 93 million cubic meters of water with a discharge rate of 7,760 liters per second. But aqueducts remain dry as the government waits on a study to "confirm which option for the execution of the project (public or private) will generate more money for the government of Colombia."

The dam is a public asset that communities cannot access, according to Wayuu authorities that have issued a legal request for help from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (CIDH), an autonomous body of the Organization of American States. Indigenous authorities claim the dam has drained the river which residents have depended

on for hundreds of years while pumping water to large estates in the south ofthe department and to El Cerrejon, a coal mine stretching the length of the peninsula.

Since the dam's completion, 4,151 child deaths have been reported in La Guajira, according to Colombia's family welfare agency, Instituto Colombiano de Beinestar Familiar.



Children in La Guajira

The government says it does not have the money to connect the $270 million dam to aqueducts, according to the finance agency researching the viability of public-private partnerships.

But a look at the resources flowing into the region shows over $250 million in annual royalties from El Cerrejon, Latin America's biggest open-pit coal mine. According to the government's new national "royalty map," close to $300 million has been invested in La Guajira since 2012.

Unless there is enough political will, no amount of resources will help communities in Colombia's second-poorest department, and the leniency given to corporate giants in the region suggests that the welfare of Wayuu people is rather low on the list of national priorities.

According to the five Wayuu authorities appealing to the CIDH, Colombian law dictates that humans must, without exception, be the first recipients of water, and only after their needs are met can the surplus can be used for agricultural, industrial, and other purposes. Even in the midst of drought and widespread disease caused by water scarcity, the El Cerrejon uses 7.1 million gallons of water a day in its 24-hour operations, according to Carlos Franco, the mine's director of International Relations. In fact, El Cerrejon has a license from the national government to use much more. "We are only using about 17 percent of our water capture permit," Franco told me. "We're allowed to use much more water."

In response to questions about the lack of water for La Guajira's population, Franco told me, "For us, its an embarrassment. It is very painful that there is no potable water in La Guajira, and there is no excuse." However, he said that El Cerrejon has recently invited the government to work with them toward a solution to La Guajira's water crisis.

Over the past 40 years, the multinational giant has not only depleted and polluted water resources, but has also violently displaced indigenous and afro-Colombian communities. According to the Jose Alvear Restrepo Lawyer's Collective, a group representing the legal interests of Wayuu communities affected by mining, the multinationals that own El Cerrejon (Angloamerican, Glencore, and BHP Billiton) have never been penalized for human rights abuses against the communities.

"It is very complicated to litigate against the company, because all of the legislation favors business interests," explained Petra Langheinrich, spokesperson for the Collective. "And here's the serious problem: You have to imagine that in Colombia, and in La Guajria particularly, the state and environmental regulatory institutions are almost nonexistent."

Last year, the Wayuu community in lower Guajira held a tribunal to judge El Cerrejon's environmental and human rights abuses, citing the absence of a judicial system in the area.

If the state is so weak against multinationals like the Cerrejon, how can it ensure that private water companies will extend service to those who can't pay?

"You have to imagine that in Colombia, and in La Guajria particularly, the state and environmental regulatory institutions are almost nonexistent." –Petra Langheinrich

In January, La Guajira's Secretary of Health called for coordination with "forces that guarantee the availability of water for human consumption" due to the intensifying viral epidemic. The department has been on official red alert and declared a "public calamity" several times in the last year for drought, malnutrition, and viral epidemics. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) also singled the department out as being in need of "immediate intervention" in 2014.

When Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos won reelection last year on a platform of peace and social equality, the rest of the world grew hopeful for an end to the 50-year armed conflict between the Colombian government and Marxist guerillas. But who will hold the national government accountable for equitable services in a post-conflict nation, in the face as such failures as La Guajira? Does an international focus on the conflict prevent a true evaluation of aid, the majority of which now pours into peacekeeping operations and narcotics control?

Most important, how will things change for the 900,000 residents of La Guajira who cannot afford another lost decade?

Victoria Mckenzie is a human rights and global health reporter based in Medellin and NYC.

Direct Link: http://www.vice.com/read/why-do-indigenous-children-in-colombia-keep-dying-of-thirst-456

Cholitas paceñas: Bolivia's indigenous women flaunt their ethnic pride

Aymara women of Bolivia show off their newfound upward mobility while preserving their traditional dress of full colourful petticoats and tall bowler hats



Aymara Indian women known as cholitas paceñas wear their traditional dress, which includes patterned shawls and bowler hats. Photograph: Robert Harding/Rex Shutterstock

Sara Shahriari in La Paz

Wednesday 22 April 2015 13.00 BST Last modified on Wednesday 22 April 2015 18.26 BST

Brilliantly coloured skirts and fringed shawls swirl and massive gold earrings and brooches glitter as young women sway up and down a room in a 17th century hotel in downtown La Paz.

It's Saturday afternoon, and modelling class is in session. But these are not size-zero supermodels wearing the latest European couture; they are petite indigenous women dressed in rakishly tilted bowler hats, shawls – and layers and layers of petticoats and skirts.

They are dressed in the traditional costume of the Aymara Indian women of La Paz – known as *cholitas paceñas* – an outfit which once which denoted membership of a marginalised and downtrodden section of Bolivian society, but now reflects the growing confidence and spending power of the country's emergent indigenous middle class.

The modelling school's director, Rosario Aguilar Rodríguez, is a lawyer and local politician who says she is proud to wear the pleated skirt known as the *pollera*. She also points out that cholita style is a sound investment



Bolivian models walk the catwalk wearing pleated skirts known as pollera. Photograph: Aizar Raldes/AFP/Getty Images

"The strongest market is in women who wear the pollera. They have the economic resources to buy a good mattress, good perfume, good furniture. So betting on indigenous and mestiza women as models means reaching a very important group," she said



Bolivia is still one of Latin America's poorest countries, but its economy has grown rapidly in recent years on the back of high mineral and gas prices, and the government's pragmatic economic policies. That growth has helped a commercial boom in La Paz and the neighbouring city of El Alto, where Aymara merchants – many of them women – play important and lucrative role.

Nilda Virginia Gutierrez is a merchant and fashion designer, whose small store in La Paz is packed floor to ceiling with a rainbow-array of skirts and shawls. "We bring out new fashion every month," she says. "We are always innovating, because there's so much competition."

Even the unpracticed eye can see that this fashion is not static. The crowns of the bowler hats that perch atop a cholita's glossy black braids are getting lower and lower; high crowns now look very last year.

"Now people are spending more - people want a whole outfit, from the jewellery to the shoes to the hat," said Gutierrez.



Casilda Paco shows off her hand jewellery. Photograph: David Mercado/Reuters/Corbis

None of that comes cheap: a Borsalino – the most famous brand of bowler hat – costs roughly 300 pounds, and a standard outfit commonly costs another 300. No outfit is complete without earrings and a sparkling brooch to fasten the shawl and another adorning the hat. A fine set may run around 1,400 pounds - but the best can be well over 6,000.

These extraordinary ensembles are shown off at events like weddings, or La Paz's yearly Gran Poder festival, which brings the cities' wealthy Aymara merchants out in force. Some of the jewels women wear in Gran Poder are so pricey that they reportedly employ bodyguards follow them throughout the day.

This increased visibility is more than an exercise in conspicuous consumption: forced into servitude under colonial rule and later relegated to the margins of society, Bolivia's many indigenous peoples were long excluded from mainstream society. Until the 1990s, wearing a pollera or a poncho to a government office would have been unthinkable.

But attitudes started to change with the election Evo Morales, the country's first indigenous president who took office in 2006.

"Before even recognizing oneself as Aymara was difficult. Really the reverse was happening – because the less Aymara you were, the more social mobility you had. Today it's very different," said sociologist Germán Guaygua, who works at the ministry of foreign affairs.

Model and TV personality Maria Elena Condori Salgado embodies both the entrepreneurial spirit and ethnic pride of this new Aymara identity. "I've worn the pollera

since I was very small. My mother wears the pollera, and so did my grandmother," she said.

"For us this is an art," Condori Salgado said of her clothes and the message they send to the world. "We are going to conserve it – at least I'm not going to change."

Direct Link: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/22/bolivia-indigenous-women-fashion-clothing

Honduran indigenous leader wins prestigious environmental prize

Lindsay Fendt
22 hours ago



Berta Cáceres at the banks of the Gualcarque River in the Río Blanco region of western Honduras. Cáceres, COPINH (the Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras) and the people of Río Blanco have maintained a two-year struggle to halt construction on the Agua Zarca hydroelectric project, which they say poses grave threats to the local environment, river and indigenous Lenca people living in the region.

Honduran indigenous rights leader Berta Cáceres is used to being under pressure. For years she and a group of fellow Lenca activists have faced violence, death threats and constant surveillance while waging peaceful protest against a hydroelectric dam project in their territory.

But this week, Cáceres, 42, faced a different kind of pressure as she stood before audiences in Washington D.C. and San Francisco to receive the most prestigious environmental award in the world.

On Monday, Cáceres and five other recipients — one for each inhabited continent — were awarded the Goldman Environmental Prize honoring grassroots environmental

activists. Along with international recognition of their cause, each prize winner receives $175,000.

“I feel very satisfied, it’s an honor to receive the award,” Cáceres said in a phone interview with The Tico Times. “It’s brought hope because we know that there are people who are watching and this will help us reinforce the rights that these people have in their territory.”

For Cáceres, this hope is crucial because her fight is far from over.

The problems began in 2009 following the Honduran military coup when the newly installed conservative government approved concessions for 47 hydroelectric dams. One of these projects, the Agua Zarca dam, would displace hundreds of indigenous Lenca people and affect other communities downstream.

The campesinos and indigenous groups that inhabit the territory were not consulted prior to the concessions’ approval, in direct violation of Honduran law.

Watch the Goldman Prize’s video of Berta Cáceres working in Honduras

Cáceres rallied the National Council of Popular and Indigenous Associations (Copinh), a group she co-founded in 1996, to fight the dam project, starting with peaceful protests in the Honduran capital. They filed complaints against the dam with the Honduran government and denounced the project in more than 150 indigenous council meetings.

In 2013, Cáceres organized a roadblock to the dam’s construction site, blocking machinery from starting construction.

The peaceful blockade escalated the conflict, causing clashes between the military, police and the dam’s private security. During one protest at the dam’s main office, a police officer opened fire on the crowd, killing one of the protestors, Tomás García.

Another protestor — 14-year-old Maycol Rodríguez — was found dead after his activist father had received death threats. According to Cáceres, she and other campaigners have been threatened and even tortured.

“The threats are constant, they don’t stop, threats of kidnapping, threats against my family, threats of murder,” Cáceres said. “But my situation is very similar to other activists in other organizations all throughout Honduras.”

According to a report released Monday by international NGO Global Witness, Honduras is the most dangerous country in the world to be an environmental or land rights activist. Between 2002 and 2011, 111 activists were killed in Honduras.

In 2014 alone, 12 activists were killed, which is more than any other country per capita. More than two-thirds of the deaths reported globaly last year occurred in Central and South America, including in Costa Rica and Guatemala.

Hydroelectric dams, mining and logging are the main drivers of these conflicts in Honduras, along with the repeal of several environmental laws, according to the Global Witness report. Cáceres's group and others in Honduras also face increased militarization and threats from private security.

Despite these obstacles, Copinh's campaign has been remarkably successful. After spending nearly a year locked out of the construction site by roadblock, one of the project's main funders, Chinese hydropower giant Sinohydro, backed out in 2013 citing concerns over serious conflicts in the area.

For now, construction on the dam has been effectively halted, but a number of investors are still funding the project.

"There is still much to be done," Cáceres said. "We are going to go back with more enthusiasm, more hope and more will to stop these companies."

Direct Link: http://www.ticotimes.net/2015/04/22/honduran-indigenous-leader-wins-prestigious-environmental-prize

UN Special Rapporteur: We Must Hear Directly From World's Indigenous Peoples

Terri Hansen
4/22/15

When Filipino Victoria Tauli-Corpuz (Igorot) was appointed the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People June 2, 2014, she became the first woman and the first indigenous person from a developing country to hold this three-year position. As such, she brings unique perspectives to the UN's human rights mandate to assess the condition of human rights and fundamental freedoms of Indigenous Peoples worldwide. In 1996, Tauli-Corpuz founded the nongovernmental organization Tebtebba, which has engaged with the U.N. on Indigenous Peoples rights, sustainable development, climate change and biodiversity. She was among those who lobbied for more than 20 years before the U.N. General Assembly finally adopted the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007. She was the Chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) from 2005 to 2009. Tauli-Corpuz talked about her role as U.N. Special Rapporteur in an exclusive interview with ICTMN.

As the very first Indigenous woman in this unique role, what will be your mandate and priorities?

I am proud to be the first woman – and the first person from a developing country – to hold this position. That brings a different perspective to these issues, and I am convinced that the empowerment of women is crucial to addressing discrimination, racism, and violence. Indigenous women face discrimination based on both race and gender, and are even less likely to hold title to their land than indigenous men. Evidence shows that securing land rights for indigenous women contributes to their livelihoods and the well-being of their families, and even decreases levels of domestic violence. While previous mandate holders have paid special attention to the rights of women and children, they have never been the focus of a thematic report. I plan to change that this year.



Filipino Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous People (Wikimedia)

In addition, I want to focus my attention on ensuring that Indigenous Peoples' rights are recognized in the U.N. post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the global climate agreement that will be adopted this December in Paris. The SDGs will set the global development agenda for the next 15 years, so it is vital that Indigenous Peoples are not left behind, especially given that they make up only 5 percent of the global population but account for 15 percent of the world's poorest people. When it comes to climate change, Indigenous Peoples have suffered some of the worst impacts and can offer some of the most promisingly solutions.

Former U.N. Special Rapporteur James Anaya spent much of his time on the ground, interviewing IPs, investigating urgent situations and compiling recommendations for Nation States, whereas Rodolfo Stavenhagen took more of an academic approach to his station. How do you plan to do things?

I have the utmost respect for both of my predecessors and the work they did to promote the rights of Indigenous Peoples – and both approaches are vital to establishing the mechanisms and safeguards that protect Indigenous Peoples' rights, such as the UNDRIP, as well as ensuring that new instruments, such as the post-2015 SDGs, do not fall below existing standards. However, real progress cannot be measured unless we hear directly from the world's Indigenous Peoples. The ability to gauge whether or not these important

instruments are actually being implemented requires that I listen to the voices of Indigenous Peoples when I visit their countries or have meetings with them elsewhere. I also have to verify reports of alleged human rights violations I receive so that I have the facts right when I make my communication to the government concerned. I will build upon the work of my predecessors which means I have to monitor and follow up on how their recommendations are being implemented by the governments.

Do you make your own schedule vis a vis the countries you visit or will you inherit a schedule from Professor Anaya?

While I may follow up on visits made by Professor Anaya, I do not inherit his schedule. The Special Rapporteur visits countries after being invited by governments. My predecessors visited the U.S., Canada, Nordic countries, Australia, New Zealand and many countries in Latin America. There were very few Asian and African countries visited so I am requesting invitations from several countries in these regions.

What was your biggest concern as chair of UNPFII, and what do you anticipate being the greatest challenge as Special Rapporteur? The most satisfying?

I was the second Chair of the UN Permanent Forum of Indigenous Issues and also the longest sitting Chair. I was in this position from 2005 to 2009. It was during my term that the UNDRIP was finally adopted. The activities leading up to this groundbreaking adoption was definitely one of the biggest challenges facing the whole indigenous movement. It took years of campaigning before the U.N. even started to draft the declaration in 1982. When formal negotiations began in 1995, the U.N. told Indigenous Peoples that we were not allowed to speak at the negotiations, only to observe. We walked out, of course, because who could respect a declaration made without the participation of the people whose rights it's supposed to uphold? The member-states realized that this threatened their credibility and invited us back as participants, so the drafting and negotiations continued with our active and equal participation. There was a real concern that it would never be adopted, or that it would be watered down, but finally in 2007 we were able to achieve this important victory.

Now, as U.N. Special Rapporteur, I face challenges in monitoring and ensuring that Indigenous Peoples' rights, enshrined in the Declaration and ILO Convention No. 169, are implemented in the countries where Indigenous Peoples live. This is where I face serious difficulties because there is still a low level of awareness on the part of many governments and the dominant society on Indigenous Peoples' issues, rights and demands. Many Indigenous Peoples have the view that there is also a lack of political will on the part of governments to respect, protect and fulfill Indigenous Peoples' individual and collective human rights.

I would also like to see that Indigenous Peoples' human rights and development issues are included in the post-2015 development agenda and in the future climate agreement which, hopefully, will be adopted in Paris this year. Indigenous Peoples are among those who are most impoverished and marginalized and yet they are the ones contributing to

the solutions for climate change by sustaining the ecosystems in their territories. Their sustainable and simple lifeways, the values and ways they harmoniously relate with nature, and their traditional knowledge contribute significantly in making this world more sustainable. Thus, respecting and fulfilling their rights to their lands, territories and resources not only lessens poverty, but is also linked to positive climate outcomes. Unfortunately, there is still a long way to go before the implementation of the Declaration and decisions in their favor made by Supreme Courts and regional courts, like the Inter-American Court on Human Rights. Egregious human rights violations continue even in countries that have ratified international human rights conventions and instruments like the UNDRIP.

Seven years after the adoption of UNDRIP what has improved for Indigenous Peoples?

There have been several gains achieved after the adoption of the Declaration. There are countries, like Bolivia and Ecuador, which passed laws on Indigenous Peoples' rights using all or most of the articles in the Declaration. There are courts, like the Supreme Court of Belize and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), which made favorable decisions on issues brought to them by Indigenous Peoples. Most important of all, Indigenous Peoples in many countries are using the Declaration for awareness raising and campaigns they are doing to claim their rights. I would daresay that Indigenous Peoples' movements in many countries and regions and even the global movement gained more strength after the adoption of the UNDRIP.

The confidence and commitment of many Indigenous Peoples to sustain their fights when their lands and rights are threatened have definitely been reinforced and developed. But it is also a fact that there are still many who do not know their rights, or are not able to stand up for those rights when they are abused. Many IPs are still victims of land grabbing by corporations and individuals, with the complicity of some State actors. The Declaration is a tool to fight these battles, and in some cases, these battles are being won. Earlier this year, Ecopetrol dismantled its drilling site in the ancestral territory of the U'wa in Colombia after the U'wa's sustained protests. This is testament to their resolve and to what can be accomplished when public opinion is galvanized and international pressure brought to bear. More governments are recognizing that they must include Indigenous Peoples in the discussion. The right of Indigenous Peoples to have their free, prior and informed consent obtained before any development project enters their territories is now being used extensively by Indigenous Peoples. This is one positive example, but the battle is long from over for many.

How has the post-2015 development process taken into account the rights of Indigenous Peoples?

Unfortunately, the rights of Indigenous Peoples have not been significantly integrated into the post-2015 development agenda. Not yet, anyway. The organization I headed before I become the Special Rapporteur, Tebtebba, continues to work to bring Indigenous Peoples' voices and issues to the Post-2015 processes. We are not very happy with the

latest draft SDG Outcome Document as it contains no explicit language on the recognition of Indigenous Peoples' or communities' land rights. Without explicit recognition, we are in danger of leaving behind the 1.5 billion people who govern their land through community tenure systems.

In the UNFCCC negotiations, we are also pressing hard to ensure recognition of Indigenous Peoples' role in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. Research shows that respecting the land rights of Indigenous Peoples is one of the most effective ways of combating climate change; our contributions must be respected and supported.

The Sengwer tribal peoples in Kenya are being evicted from their homelands for a Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD+) related project.

There are existing safeguards in the REDD decisions reached in several UNFCCC processes which include the need to respect the rights and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, including the need for their full and effective participation, among others. However, these safeguards are not yet implemented by most governments.

There is absolutely no excuse for governments to forcibly evict Indigenous Peoples from their land. This is not just contrary to the UNDRIP and international human rights law. It is also a violation of the REDD+ safeguards. The government illegally forced the Sengwer from their ancestral homes, the land they had lived on for centuries, as part of a World Bank-funded development project. Even World Bank President Jim Yong Kim has criticized the evictions, but they haven't stopped. Land grabs in the name of REDD+, conservation, and development are unfortunately seen in many indigenous territories, and are often accompanied by grave human rights violations: evictions, persecution, imprisonment, and killings. I hope that the international attention brought to issues like these will convince the government that it must reverse its policies immediately.

The number of indigenous nations working on an international level has grown exponentially, with new organizations, networks, and movements appearing monthly and with them, new communications projects to ensure the world has access to the indigenous side of the story. Despite these considerable advances, various governments, corporations, paramilitary organizations and special interest groups continue to violate indigenous rights, in some cases dragging entire civilizations to extinction. How will you work to remedy this crisis?

There is no easy solution to this problem, but I am constantly amazed at the solutions and strategies that my fellow Indigenous Peoples put forth. And there are a number of tools at my disposal to help raise awareness of both the issues and potential solutions to the problems that Indigenous Peoples are facing. By leveraging these tools I hope to galvanize international pressure against the violation of Indigenous Peoples' rights and help promote constructive dialogues between states and Indigenous Peoples towards mutually agreed solutions to the problems they face. Corporations also have to be pushed to respect the human rights of Indigenous Peoples and to create systems where

Indigenous Peoples are fairly compensated when resources are extracted from their territories. Part of my work is to talk with governments and corporations as well as other actors like paramilitary groups to stop violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights.

Ultimately, while Indigenous Peoples around the world face similar challenges, these battles are often won at the local levels. When I first became an activist in the 1970s, I got involved with the campaign against the Chico River Hydroelectric Dam, which would have displaced 300,000 Kalinga and Bontoc people. We managed to stop the dam from being built and the World Bank had to cancel its funding for this project. In southern Chile, the Mapuche people continue to make progress in reclaiming land colonized by Europeans in the late 19th century. Just last year they received a promise that 50,000 hectares (123,552.69 acres) would be returned to them. These local battles draw on international victories like the adoption of UNDRIP. I am proud and thankful for this progress, but there are still far too many Indigenous Peoples who today are battling for their rights to be recognized and respected.

Does being so active in the international arena leave you much time for a personal life?

I am not just an activist for Indigenous Peoples but also for women. I believe in the saying that "the personal is political and the political is personal." For me there is no dichotomy between my personal and my professional life. Whatever I do in my work to promote the rights and development aspirations of Indigenous Peoples will also contribute to a better life for my family and my community. It would be good if I had more time to spend with my family and I try to do this within the limitations I have.

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/22/un-special-rapporteur-we-must-hear-directly-worlds-indigenous-peoples-160090

Native Actors Walk off Set of Adam Sandler Movie After Insults to Women, Elders

Vincent Schilling
4/23/15

Approximately a dozen Native actors and actresses, as well as the Native cultural advisor, left the set of Adam Sandler's newest film production, *The Ridiculous Six*, on Wednesday. The actors, who were primarily from the Navajo nation, left the set after the satirical western's script repeatedly insulted native women and elders and grossly misrepresented Apache culture.

The examples of disrespect included Native women's names such as Beaver's Breath and No Bra, an actress portraying an Apache woman squatting and urinating while smoking a peace pipe, and feathers inappropriately positioned on a teepee.



Actor Loren Anthony stands next to a seated Adam Sandler on the set of 'Ridiculous Six.' Photo source: instagram.com/lorenanthony

The film, which is said to be a spoof of *The Magnificent Seven* and was written by Adam Sandler and his frequent collaborator Tim Herlihy, is currently under production by Happy Madison Productions for a Netflix-only release. The movie will star Adam Sandler, Nick Nolte, Steve Buscemi, Dan Aykroyd, Jon Lovitz and Vanilla Ice.

Among the actors who walked off the set were Navajo Nation tribal members Loren Anthony, who is also the lead singer of the metal band Bloodline, and film student Allison Young. Anthony says that though he understands the movie is a comedy, the portrayal of the Apache was severely negligent and the insults to women were more than enough reason to walk off the set.

"There were about a dozen of us who walked off the set," said Anthony, who told ICTMN he had initially refused to do the movie. He then agreed to take the job when producers informed him they had hired a cultural consultant and efforts would be made for tasteful representation of Natives.



Actor Loren Anthony gears up for a fight scene with Nick Nolte, who is visible over his shoulder, on the set of 'Ridiculous Six.' Photo source: Image source: instagram.com/lorenanthony

“I was asked a long time ago to do some work on this and I wasn't down for it. Then they told me it was going to be a comedy, but it would not be racist. So I agreed to it but on Monday things started getting weird on the set,” he said.

Anthony says he was first insulted that the movie costumes that were supposed to portray Apache were significantly incorrect and that the jokes seemed to get progressively worse.

"We were supposed to be Apache, but it was really stereotypical and we did not look Apache at all. We looked more like Comanche," he said. "One thing that really offended a lot of people was that there was a female character called Beaver's breath. One character says 'Hey, Beaver's Breath.' And the Native woman says, 'How did you know my name?'"

“They just treated us as if we should just be on the side. When we did speak with the main director, he was trying to say the disrespect was not intentional and this was a comedy.”

"The producers just told us, 'If you guys are so sensitive, you should leave.'" —Alison Young

Allison Young, Navajo, a former film student from Dartmouth, was also offended by the stereotypes portrayed and the outright disrespect paid to her and others by the director and producers.

"When I began doing this film, I had an uneasy feeling inside of me and I felt so conflicted," she said. "I talked to a former instructor at Dartmouth and he told me to take

this as finally experiencing stereotyping first hand. We talked to the producers about our concerns. They just told us, 'If you guys are so sensitive, you should leave.' I was just standing there and got emotional and teary-eyed. I didn't want to cry but the feeling just came over me. This is supposed to be a comedy that makes you laugh. A film like this should not make someone feel this way."

"Nothing has changed," said Young. "We are still just Hollywood Indians."

Goldie Tom also shared her frustrations with ICTMN. "I felt this was all really disrespectful," she said. "Our costumes did not portray Apache people. The consultant, Bruce spoke to the crew and told them we should not have braids and chokers and he was very disappointed. He asked to speak with Adam Sandler. We talked to the producers about other things in the script and they said 'It's in the script and we are not going to change it.' Overall, we were just treated disrespectfully, the spoke down to us and treated everyone with strong tones."

74-year old David Hill, Choctaw, a member of the American Indian Movement, also left the set. "They were being disrespectful," he said. "They were bringing up those same old arguments that Dan Snyder uses in defending the Redskins. But let me tell you, our dignity is not for sale. It is a real shame because a lot of people probably stay because they need a job."

Hill also mentioned that the producers called back the consultant as well as other native actors to their departure from the set on Wednesday.

"I hope they will listen to us," Hill said. "We understand this is a comedy, we understand this is humor, but we won't tolerate disrespect. I told the director if he had talked to a native woman the way they were talked to in this movie—I said I would knock his ass out."

"This isn't my first rodeo, if someone doesn't speak up, no one will."

Neither Adam Sandler nor anyone for Happy Madison Productions responded to our attempts in reaching out to them for comment.

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/23/native-actors-walk-set-adam-sandler-movie-after-insults-women-elders-160110

'We're going to resist': Brazil's indigenous groups fight to keep their land in face of new law

PEC 215, a proposed amendment to Brazil's constitution, threatens to make worse the already fragile plight of the country's impoverished indigenous communities

Claire Rigby in Tekoa Pyau

Thursday 23 April 2015 12.36 BST Last modified on Friday 24 April 2015 00.00 BST

From downtown São Paulo, the Pico do Jaraguá – the crest of a mountain ridge on the city's north-western horizon – looks like a broken tooth, crowned by a towering TV antenna. Just beyond the rocky peak and down a steep, deeply rutted, unmade road, lies the nascent village of Tekoa Itakupe, one of the newest fronts in Brazil's indigenous people's struggle for land to call their own.

Once part of a coffee plantation, the idyllic 72-hectare plot is currently occupied by three families from the Guarani community who moved onto the land in July 2014 after it was recognised as traditional Guarani territory by Funai, the federal agency for Indian affairs.

The group had hoped that would be a first step on the road to its eventual official demarcation as indigenous territory, but they now face eviction after a judge granted a court order to the landowner, Antônio "Tito" Costa, a lawyer and former local politician.

Ari Karai, the 74-year-old chief or *cacique* of Tekoa Ytu, one of two established Indian villages at the base of the peak, says the group intends to resist. "How can they evict us when this is recognised Indian land?" he asks.

The dispute comes at a crucial time for Brazil's more than 300 indigenous peoples. Earlier this month, more than a thousand indigenous leaders met in Brasília to protest and organise against PEC 215, a proposed constitutional amendment that would shift the power to demarcate indigenous land from the executive to the legislature – that is, from Funai, the Ministry of Justice and the president, by decree, to Congress.

The Indians' fierce opposition to placing demarcation in the hands of Congress is easy to understand: some 250 members of Congress are linked to the powerful "ruralist" congressional caucus, representing interests including agro-business and the timber, mining and energy industries. In contrast, there has been only one indigenous member of Congress in the entire history of Brazil: Mário Juruna, a Xavante cacique, who served from 1983-87 in Rio de Janeiro.

Fiona Watson, the research director for Survival International – the London-based charity which campaigns for indigenous people – said that if approved, PEC215 would "put the fox in charge of the hen-house".

"Many Indians consider PEC 215 a move to legalise the theft and invasion of their lands by agri-business. It will cause further delays, wrangling and obstacles to the recognition of their land rights," she said.

The demarcation of Brazil's indigenous territories, specified in the country's 1988 constitution, was supposed to have been completed by 1993. Twenty-seven years on, the majority of territory has been demarcated, with 517,000 Indians living on registered land mainly in the Amazon region, but more than 200 applications are still in limbo.

Under President Dilma Rousseff, fewer demarcations have been decreed than under any government since 1988, despite the announcement last weekend of three long-awaited demarcations in the states of Amazonas and Pará.

That same day, at Tekoa Pyau – the larger of Jaraguá's two established Indian communities – dogs sprawled beneath an overcast sky as children ran barefoot over packed earth studded with litter and bits of broken brick, or played football on the village's diminutive pitch. Across the road at the second village, Tekoa Ytu, the natural pool where the children used to swim lay empty and silent, thanks to contamination from a stream running through a favela on the hillside above, polluting the waterfall, pool and river where the community once washed, fished and drew water with a steady stream of raw sewage.

Tekoa Ytu is Brazil's smallest officially demarcated indigenous reserve, where some 600 Guarani Indians live on 1.7 hectares of land in squalid, insalubrious conditions. Tekoa Pyau, similarly impoverished, is still making slow, very uncertain progress through the demarcation process. The strain shows on the face of Tekoa Pyau's young *cacique*, Victor F S Guaraní, 30, who says that without demarcation the community has no future. "It's so complicated," he says, grimacing.

It's all they have, but the village is hardly the kind of the place they would live if they had a choice, says Guaraní. It's cramped and extremely poor. Many of the village families are in receipt of the bolsa família, a federal benefits payment to those living on low incomes, but other than that, the community receives minimal assistance from the state, says Guaraní.

For Brazil's indigenous community, a lack of representation in or by government is just the institutional face of the discrimination they encounter on a day-to-day basis.

"Some of the people who live around here say, 'They're not real Indians, they're *favelados*'," says Guaraní, using a pejorative term for slum-dwellers. In his petition to a local court calling for their eviction, Antônio Costa writes of the Guarani at Itakupe with scorn, calling them unemployed and unproductive, and describing the traditional dress they sometimes wear as "ridiculous fancy dress". Confined to cramped villages and often dismissed as backward, the poverty of Brazil's urban Indians, their inward-looking culture and a longstanding lack of political and social agency combines to make them invisible to many of their fellow Brazilians, even when they're standing in plain sight. "When I go into the city centre," says Guaraní, "people ask if I'm Bolivian."

During the first of a series of anti-PEC 215 protests in São Paulo last year, he says, bystanders were asking why Indians had come all the way from the Amazon to protest,

unaware of the Jaraguá reservation just 15km north of the city centre, or of the Guaraní living at Parelheiros, 40km to the south. “By the end of those protests, there were whites marching with us,” says Guaraní. “When I saw them painting their faces and chanting alongside us, it was very emotional.”

At Tekoa Itakupe, wearing a feathered headdress and a buriti-fibre skirt that he has put on to receive visitors, cacique Karai shows off his crops: the families are cultivating corn, manioc, sweet potato and mango. In contrast to the difficult conditions in the villages below, Itakupe has fresh water from dozens of springs, expanses of secondary growth Atlantic forest, a waterfall, and a set of 10-metre-tall mossy ruins buried deep in the valley, thought to be from the time of the *bandeirantes*, Brazil’s colonising pioneers. On the other side of the valley stands a long swathe of eucalyptus, a plantation kept by Costa.

Costa, 92, says the land has not been permanently inhabited by Indians, as the constitution states it must be in order to be eligible for the constitutional protection of indigenous culture and custom. “Indians have never lived on the land in question,” he told Brazil’s R7 news last week. “Or if there was ever an Indian village at Jaraguá, as they claim, those were other times. It’s over. This is absurd.”

Karai is worried that the children in the villages below are losing their connection to nature. “Our children have become afraid of the forest,” he says. “There are things we can teach them down there, but they know nothing about planting crops.” A number of the families from Tekoa Pyau and Tekoa Ytu plan to move to Itakupe, he says, if the right to remain can be established: “We don’t want anything from this land other than to live on it and take care of it.” His face crumples suddenly as he speaks. “There is no joy for us in any of this,” he says. “But we’re going to resist, whatever happens. What choice do we have? We have to guarantee the future survival of our people and our culture.”

Similar resistance is taking place all over Brazil, often in the face of extreme adversity and even violence. In the state of Mato Grosso do Sul in particular, impoverished Guarani Indians live in crowded reservations, crammed between immense soy, sugar and cattle farms, or clinging to the margins in squalid roadside camps. They suffer violent attacks, assassinations and a desperately high suicide rate, particularly among adolescents. “In São Paulo we don’t have any direct contact with farmers,” said Guaraní. “But in Mato Grosso and Espírito Santo, the struggle is dangerous: they kill caciques, they kill children.”

But Indian resistance is rapidly coalescing, he said. At street protests and online, alliances, strategies and a sense of empowerment are being forged between Brazil’s more than 300 indigenous groups, and with the *quilombola* communities whose members are descendants of escaped slaves, and whose right to a homeland is also threatened by PEC 215. “I’m speaking to people in Mato Grosso, Espírito Santo and Santa Catarina every day now,” says Guaraní, “and even to people in Argentina and Paraguay.”

The movement is going to need every bit of solidarity, support and motivation it can muster this coming year, which will almost certainly see a vote on PEC 215. If passed, as

it seems will likely be the case, the amendment also allows for the review of previous demarcations, and introduces exceptions to the exclusive use of protected land, including leasing to non-Indians and the construction of infrastructure, “in the public interest”.

“Not even all the caciques understand the implications,” says Guaraní. “But once it’s explained to them, everyone becomes concerned, even the children.”

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